

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Seventy-first  
Annual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah

31 March–1 April, 2001



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of the  
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March 31 and April 1, 2001

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# Report of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, March 31 and April 1, 2001. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, March 31, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the general priesthood, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Bal-

lard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christoferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, and Dennis B. Neuenschwander

*First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Rex D. Pinegar, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

*Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Richard E. Cook, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, Keith K. Hilbig, J. Kent Jolley, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Robert F. Orton, Stephen B. Oveson, Wayne S. Peterson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B.

Roueché, R. Conrad Schultz, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

*Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

#### **Other authorities present**

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## **SATURDAY MORNING SESSION**

The first session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 10:00 A.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." President Faust then made the following remarks.

#### **President James E. Faust**

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge all of the General Authorities present in the Conference Center and seated on the stand at overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall, and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us. We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many parts of the world. We are pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org and also express appreciation to the other Internet service providers who have given of their time in providing access to the conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord" and will now favor us with "For the Beauty of the Earth." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy. It will then be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

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The choir sang "For the Beauty of the Earth."

Elder W. Craig Zwick offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Expressions of gratitude

My brothers and sisters, my heart is filled with gratitude this morning as we gather in this great conference. I am grateful that the Lord has spared my life to see this day. As I reminded the young women to whom I spoke a week ago, someone recently gave me a copy of my old high school yearbook. It was the year of my graduation. It was 73 years ago. I was part of the class of 1928. It was an intriguing experience to thumb through it. Most of those who were so young and energetic at that time have passed on. A few are left, but they are wrinkled and somewhat feeble in their movements. Now and again when I complain of some little ailment, my wife will say, "It's your age, boy."

I repeat, I am deeply grateful to be alive. I am excited with this wonderful age in which we live. I thank the Lord for men and women of great dedication and great capacity who are doing so much to extend human life and to make it more comfortable and pleasant. I am grateful for good doctors who help us with our infirmities.

I am thankful for wonderful friends, among whom I include the great and faithful Saints across the world whom I have come to know. Thank you for all that you do for me, for the letters you send, for flowers and books and various expressions of your thoughtfulness and love. I am thankful for generous friends through whose kindness it has been possible for me to get out among the Saints in the nations of the earth, to meet with them, to share testimony and love with them.

I am grateful for my dear wife, with whom I have shared these nearly 64 years of companionship. I feel grateful for a faithful posterity. The Lord has blessed me in a marvelous way.

I am thankful for my Brethren of the General Authorities, who are so kind and deferential toward me. I am thankful for every one of you in this great family, more than 11 million strong, which constitutes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### The strength and growth of the Church

In opening the conference I simply want to very briefly give a report on the Church.

It is stronger than it has ever been. It is not only larger in numbers, but I believe there is greater faithfulness among the Saints generally. During the past six months we have had the opportunity of dedicating temples scattered over the earth, far and wide. We have heard testimony of the truth of this work spoken in various languages. We have seen the overwhelming faith of our people who have traveled long distances to get to these dedications. We have witnessed a marvelous increase in the growth of temple activity. We are experiencing slow but steady improvement in most of our fields of activity.

I am so grateful that we live in an era of comparative peace. There are no great wars raging across the world. There is trouble here and there but not a great worldwide conflict. We are able to carry the gospel to so many nations of the earth and bless the lives of the people wherever it goes.

We are well on our way to enlarging the educational opportunity for our youth. We have announced that Ricks College will become a four-year school to be known as BYU—Idaho. We are grateful to learn that the school has now received an endorsement from the accrediting body. It is remarkable to have this in so short a time.

We are constructing new buildings on a scale of which we never have dreamed before. We must do so if we are to accommodate the growth of the Church.

The welfare program moves forward. We are particularly grateful that we have been able to extend humanitarian aid of a very substantial volume in many parts of the earth. We have distributed food, medicine, clothing, bedding, and other necessities to assist those who have suddenly found themselves victims of catastrophe.

I will speak this evening to the priesthood brethren concerning another program which I think will be of great interest to all of you.

### **Exceeding temple construction goals**

One of the bellwether marks of the growth and vitality of the Church is the construction of temples. I have spoken of this before, but I am so deeply grateful that since we last met in general conference we were able to reach our goal of 100 operating temples by the end of the year 2000; in fact, we exceeded it. We have just come from dedicating a temple in Uruguay, the 103rd working temple of the Church.

The great work of temple building goes on throughout the world. I looked the other day at a list of all the temples which are now in operation or have been announced—121 of them. I was amazed at the length of the list and the incredible diversity of the areas in which they are located. It is wonderful, but we are not satisfied. We will keep on working to bring the temples to the people, making it more convenient for Latter-day Saints everywhere to receive the blessings which can be had only in these holy houses.

I have said before that the blessings of the temple represent that fulness of the priesthood of which the Lord spoke when He revealed His will unto the Prophet Joseph Smith. With the location of temples much nearer to the homes of

our people, there is made more available to them all of the ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead.

Temples will soon be dedicated in Winter Quarters, Nebraska; Guadalajara, Mexico; and Perth, Australia. They are under construction in Asunción, Paraguay; Campinas, Brazil; the Tri-Cities area of Washington; Copenhagen, Denmark; Lubbock, Texas; Monterrey, Mexico; Nauvoo, Illinois; Snowflake, Arizona; and The Hague, Netherlands. Another six temples have been announced, and groundbreaking services will soon be held for these. In addition, we have visited and are giving consideration to a significant number of potential temple sites in the United States, Central and South America, Europe, and the isles of the sea. I will not mention their names because this would only create excitement when we do not yet have the ground on which to build them.

The construction of each temple represents a maturing of the Church. We will continue to build these sacred houses of the Lord as rapidly as energy and resources will allow. We are grateful for the faithful Latter-day Saints who pay their tithing and make possible this important program.

### **Return good for evil; be friendly**

We are not without critics, some of whom are mean and vicious. We have always had them, and I suppose we will have them all through the future. But we shall go forward, returning good for evil, being helpful and kind and generous. I remind you of the teachings of our Lord concerning these matters. You are all acquainted with them. Let us be good people. Let us be friendly people. Let us be neighborly people. Let us be what members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ought to be.

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, how much I appreciate your prayers



and your love. I extend my love to each of you. May the heavens open, and may blessings come down upon you in abundance as you walk in faithfulness before the Lord.

We shall now be pleased to go forward with the proceedings of this great gathering.

God bless you, my beloved associates, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "We Are Sowing."

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### President Faust

The choir has just sung "We Are Sowing." We will now hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us.

Following Elder Jensen's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then address us, followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Fulfilling the purposes of mortality

One of the most exhilarating moments of your life—when you were filled with anticipation, excitement, and gratitude—you are not able to remember. That experience occurred in the premortal life when you were informed that finally your time had come to leave the spirit world to dwell on earth with a mortal body.

You knew you could learn through personal experience the lessons that would bring happiness on earth—lessons that would eventually lead you to exaltation and eternal life as a glorified, celestial being in the presence of your Holy Father and His Beloved Son.

You understood that there would be challenges, for you would live in an environment of both righteous and evil influences. Yet surely you resolved that no matter what the cost, no matter what the effort, suffering, and testing, you would return victorious.

You were reserved to come when the fulness of the gospel is on earth. You arrived when His Church and the priest-

hood authority to perform the sacred temple ordinances are in place. You anticipated being born into a home where parents would be expected to love, nurture, strengthen, and teach you truths. You knew that in time you would have the opportunity to form your own eternal family as husband or wife, father or mother. Oh, how you must have rejoiced at that prospect.

These words express the most fundamental purpose of your being on earth:

"We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:24–26).

After Adam was placed on earth, God said, "Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man

should be alone" (Abraham 5:14). Eve and Adam formed the first family. God declared, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Moses 3:24). They had children who also formed families. "And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God" (Moses 5:16). The pattern of families essential to Father's plan of happiness was established, and our need to continually "call upon God" emphasized. You are in the midst of living that plan.

### Strive for the ideal family

Through the restored gospel we learn there is an *ideal family*. It is a family composed of a righteous Melchizedek Priesthood bearer with a righteous wife sealed to him and children born in the covenant or sealed to them. With a mother in the home in an environment of love and service, the parents teach their children, through example and precept, the ways of the Lord and His truths. They fulfill their divinely appointed roles mentioned in the family proclamation (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Their children mature by living teachings instilled from birth. They develop characteristics of obedience, integrity, love of God, and faith in His holy plan. In due course, each of those children seeks a companion with similar ideals and aspirations. They are sealed in the temple and bear children, and the eternal plan continues, with generation strengthening generation.

Throughout your life on earth, seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life *through the ideal family*. While you may not have yet reached that ideal, do all you can through obedience and faith in the Lord to consistently draw as close to it as you are able. Let nothing dissuade you from that objective. If it requires fundamental changes in your personal life, make them.

When you have the required age and maturity, obtain all of the ordinances of the temple you can receive. If for the pres-

ent that does not include sealing in the temple to a righteous companion, live for it. Pray for it. Exercise faith that you will obtain it. Never do anything that would make you unworthy of it. If you have lost the vision of eternal marriage, rekindle it.

If your dream requires patience, give it. As brothers, we prayed and worked for 30 years before our mother and our nonmember father were sealed in the temple. Don't become overanxious. Do the best you can. We cannot say whether that blessing will be obtained on this side of the veil or beyond it, but the Lord will keep His promises. In His infinite wisdom, He will make possible all you qualify in worthiness to receive. Do not be discouraged. Living a pattern of life as close as possible to the ideal will provide much happiness, great satisfaction, and impressive growth while here on earth, regardless of your current life circumstances.

### "Good things" can become distractions

Satan and his hosts will do all in their power to keep you from obtaining the ordinances required for the ideal family. He will attempt to distract you from centering your mind and heart on raising a strong family by nurturing your children as the Lord requires.

Are there so many fascinating, exciting things to do or so many challenges pressing down upon you that it is hard to keep focused on that which is essential? When things of the world crowd in, all too often the wrong things take highest priority. Then it is easy to forget the fundamental purpose of life. Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with "good things" so there is no room for the essential ones. Have you unconsciously been caught in that trap?

"Men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the

great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, . . . for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Why has your moral agency been given to you? Only to live a pleasurable life and to make choices to do the things you want to do? Or is there a more fundamental reason—to be able to make the choices that will lead you to fully implement your purpose for being here on earth and to establish priorities in your life that will ensure the development and happiness the Lord wants you to receive.

### **Danger of focusing only on pleasure**

Recently I met an intelligent young man with great potential. He was undecided about a mission. He has decided not to attend a university now. In his free time he does only what he likes to do. He doesn't work because he doesn't have to, and it would take time from pleasure. He passed seminary classes without much thought of personally applying the knowledge gained. I noted:

"You are making choices today that appear to give you what you want: an easy life, abundant enjoyment, and not much sacrifice. You can do that for a while, yet every decision you make narrows your future. You are eliminating possibilities and options. There will come a time, and it won't be too distant, when you are going to spend the rest of your life doing things you don't want to do, in places you don't want to be, because you have not prepared yourself. You are not taking advantage of your opportunities."

I mentioned how everything I treasure today began to mature in the mission field. Missionary service is not something we do for ourselves, yet great growth and preparation for the future are gained from a mission. Missionaries focus outside of themselves on other people. They draw close to the Lord and really learn His teachings. They find individuals who are interested in the message but not sure of

its worth. Missionaries try with every capacity—prayer, fasting, and testifying—to help individuals embrace the truth. A mission teaches one to be led by the Spirit, to understand our purpose for being on earth and how to accomplish it. I gave him a blessing. As he left, I prayed earnestly that the Lord would help him choose the right priorities. Otherwise, he will fail in life's purpose.

### **Discipline and sacrifice develop character**

In stark contrast, consider the example of another young man. Through the years I have watched how his parents have taught him from infancy to unwaveringly live the commandments of God. By example and precept, they nurtured him, together with their other children, in truth. They encouraged him to develop discipline and sacrifice to obtain worthy goals. This young man chose swimming to instill in his character those qualities. Early-morning practice sessions required discipline and sacrifice. Over time he excelled in that sport.

Then came the challenges—for example, a championship swim meet on Sunday. Would he participate? Would he rationalize an exception to his rule of not swimming on Sunday to help his team win the championship? No, he would not yield, even under intense peer pressure. He was called names, even physically abused. But he would not yield. The rejection of friends, the loneliness, and the pressure brought times of sadness and tears. But he would not yield. He was learning firsthand what each of us must come to know—the reality of Paul's counsel to Timothy: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Over the years this consistent pattern of righteous living—woven from hundreds of correct decisions, some in the face of great challenge—has developed a character of strength and capacity. Now, as a missionary, he is appreciated by his peers

for his ability to work, his knowledge of truth, his unwavering devotion, and his determination to share the gospel. One who earlier was rejected by his peers now has become a respected leader of his peers. Is there a message for you in these examples?

### **Seek the Lord's will, not convenience**

While wholesome pleasure results from much we do that is good, it is not our prime purpose for being on earth. Seek to know and do the will of the Lord, not just what is convenient or what makes life easy. You have His plan of happiness. You know what to do, or can find out through study and prayer. Do it willingly. The Lord declared:

"It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"... Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in no wise lose their reward.

"But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned" (D&C 58:26–29)—meaning stopped in progress and development.

### **Get what you pay for in spiritual matters**

An axiom we all understand is that you get what you pay for. That is true for spiritual matters as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths that are learned in your own life. What you get is the molding of character, the growth in capacity, the success-

ful completion of your purpose here on earth—to be proven.

Time and time again at funerals, statements are made that the deceased will inherit all blessings of celestial glory when that individual has in no way qualified by obtaining the necessary ordinances and by keeping the required covenants. That won't happen. Such blessings can be earned only by meeting the Lord's requirements. His mercy does not overcome the requirements of His law. They must be met.

### **Put first things first**

Some places are sacred and holy, where it seems easier to discern the direction of the Holy Spirit. The temple is such a place. Find a retreat of peace and quiet where periodically you can ponder and let the Lord establish the direction of your life. Each of us needs to periodically check our bearings and confirm that we are on course. Sometime soon you may benefit from taking this personal inventory:

- What are my highest priorities to be accomplished while on earth?
- How do I use my discretionary time? Is some of it consistently applied to my highest priorities?
- Is there anything I know I should not be doing? If so, I will repent and stop it now.

In a quiet moment write down your responses. Analyze them. Make any necessary adjustments.

Put first things first. Do the best you can while on earth to have an *ideal family*. To help you do that, ponder and apply the principles in the proclamation on the family. I testify that the Lord lives. He loves you. As you live worthily and honestly seek His help, He will guide and strengthen you to know His will and to be able to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Marlin K. Jensen

### Be humble

One of the memorable themes of last October's general conference was that in addition to being concerned about what we *do*, we Latter-day Saints ought also to pay attention to what we *are* and are striving to *become*.<sup>1</sup> With that principle in mind, I listened attentively last November to President Gordon B. Hinckley's address to the youth of the Church. I was touched by the six priceless bits of wisdom he shared describing what youth ought to *be*. One of the six—"be humble"—was of special interest to me.<sup>2</sup>

When I suggested to my wife several weeks ago that because of President Hinckley's talk I was considering humility as a possible topic for my remarks today, she paused and, with a twinkle in her eye, teasingly replied, "That leaves you only a few days to gain some!" Being thus encouraged, I have reflected on what might be involved in obeying President Hinckley's injunction to "be humble."

To begin, it should come as no surprise that, in the estimation of some, humility ranks quite low on the scale of desirable character traits. Popular books have been written in recent years on integrity, common sense, civility, and a host of other virtues, but apparently there is little market for humility. Obviously, in these coarsening times when we are taught the art of negotiating by intimidation, and *assertiveness* has become a byword of the business world, those seeking to become humble will be a small and overlooked but critically important minority.

Consciously trying to acquire humility is also problematic. I remember once hearing one of my colleagues in the Seventy say about humility that "if you think you have it, you don't." He suggested we should try to develop humility and be sure we didn't know when we got it, and then

we would have it. But if we ever thought we had it, we wouldn't.<sup>3</sup>

This is one of the lessons C. S. Lewis teaches in his well-known *Screwtape Letters*. In letter XIV, a good man who is being recruited by a devil and his apprentice to their side is growing humble, and the devil remarks that "this is very bad." With great insight, Lewis has the devil say to his associate, "Your patient has become humble; have you drawn his attention to the fact?"<sup>4</sup>

### How to develop humility

Fortunately the Savior has given us a model for developing humility. When His disciples approached Him and inquired, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He responded by placing a little child in their midst and stating, "Whosoever . . . shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>5</sup>

In this passage the Savior teaches us that to become humble is to become as a child. How does a person become as a child, and what are the childlike qualities we ought to develop? King Benjamin, in his profound Book of Mormon sermon, provides guidance:

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."<sup>6</sup>

King Benjamin seems to teach that becoming like a child is a gradual process of spiritual development in which we are aided by the Holy Ghost and our reliance

on Christ's Atonement. Through this process, we will eventually acquire the childlike attributes of meekness, humility, patience, love, and spiritual submissiveness. True humility will inevitably lead us to say to God, "Thy will be done." And because what we *are* does affect what we *do*, our submissiveness will be reflected in our reverence, gratitude, and willingness to accept callings, counsel, and correction.

### Submissiveness is not subservience

A story contained in the family lore of Brigham Young's descendants illustrates the submissive nature of humility. It recounts that in a public meeting the Prophet Joseph, possibly as a test, sternly rebuked Brigham Young for something he had done or something he was supposed to have done but hadn't—the detail is unclear. When Joseph finished the rebuke, everyone in the room waited for Brigham Young's response. This powerful man, later known as the Lion of the Lord, in a voice everyone could tell was sincere, said simply and humbly, "Joseph, what do you want me to do?"<sup>7</sup>

The power of that response itself brings a feeling of humility. It reminds us that the greatest act of courage and love in the history of mankind—Christ's atoning sacrifice—was also the greatest act of humility and submissiveness. Some may wonder if those seeking to become humble must forever defer to the strongly held opinions and positions of others. Certainly the Savior's life evidences that true humility is anything but subservience, weakness, or servility.

### Pride—the antithesis of humility

Another helpful perspective on humility can be obtained by examining its antithesis—pride. Just as humility leads to other virtues such as modesty, teachableness, and unpretentiousness, pride leads to many other vices. In Latter-day

Saint theology, it was through pride that Satan became the adversary of all truth. It was the growth of this arrogance, termed *hubris*, that the wise men of ancient Greece portrayed as the sure road to destruction.

Twelve years ago President Ezra Taft Benson delivered a powerful conference address declaring that pride is "the universal sin, the great vice."<sup>8</sup> He taught that pride is essentially competitive in nature and made reference to this quote from C. S. Lewis:

"Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If every one else became equally rich, clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone."<sup>9</sup>

What an interesting commentary on today's highly competitive and thus prideful world. What an important reminder as well, for those of us who are blessed with the fulness of the gospel, to avoid both the condition and appearance of haughtiness or condescension in all of our human relationships.

### How humility would change the world

I think sometimes of what life would be like if we all possessed greater humility.

Imagine a world in which we would replace *I* as the dominant pronoun.

Think of the impact on the pursuit of knowledge if being learned without being arrogant were the norm.

Consider the climate that would exist within in a marriage or family—or any organization, for that matter—if through genuine humility mistakes were freely admitted and forgiven, if we were not

afraid to praise others for fear they might gain on us, and if all were able to listen as well as we now verbalize.

Contemplate the advantages of life in a society in which considerations of status were only secondary, where citizens were more concerned with their responsibilities than their rights, and where those in authority might even occasionally step forward and humbly acknowledge, "I could be wrong." Must our need to be "right" be so all-consuming? Surely this intolerance of others and their viewpoints is nothing less than the hubris the Greeks viewed and warned against as the suicidal sin. One wonders how differently even recent world history might be written if its principal participants had yielded to the gentle nudgings of humility.

Even more importantly, think of the role of humility in the process of repentance. Is it not humility, coupled with faith in Christ, that carries the transgressor to God in prayer, to the offended party in apology, and, where necessary, to his or her priesthood leader in confession?

### Examples of humility

I am grateful for examples of humility I have encountered in my life.

Once my father, in the heat and frustration of a humid July afternoon, overreacted to my youthful farming blunders and administered punishment which I felt was in excess of the crime. Later he approached me with an apology and a much-appreciated expression of confidence in my abilities. That humble expression has remained in my memory for more than 40 years.

I have seen a constant humility in my wonderful wife. Like Nephi turning to Lehi for direction after Lehi had momentarily faltered, she has stayed at my side for 34 years and consistently supported and loved me "notwithstanding my weakness."<sup>10</sup>

I am often deeply moved by evidences of humility in the scriptures. Con-

sider John the Baptist declaring of the Savior, "He must increase, but I must decrease."<sup>11</sup> Think of Moroni pleading with us not to condemn him because of his imperfections, but to thank God that He made Moroni's imperfections manifest so that we can learn to be wiser than Moroni was.<sup>12</sup> Nor should we forget the exclamation of Moses, who, after experiencing the greatness of God and His creations, acknowledged that "for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed."<sup>13</sup> Is not Moses' recognition of our complete dependence on God the beginning of true humility?

### "To walk humbly with thy God"

I resonate to the English author John Ruskin's memorable statement that "the first test of a truly great man is his humility." He continued:

"I do not mean, by humility, doubt of his own power. . . . [But really] great men . . . have a curious . . . feeling that . . . greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them. . . . And they see something Divine . . . in every other man . . . and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."<sup>14</sup>

The Old Testament prophet Micah, like our living prophet, President Hinckley, was concerned about nurturing the development of humility. To his people he said, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"<sup>15</sup>

God bless us all to walk humbly with Him and with all men. I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a true prophet and that his counsel to "be humble" comes from God. I testify that Jesus Christ, God's meek and lowly Son, personifies humility. I know that it will be in humility that we one day kneel at the Savior's feet to be judged of Him.<sup>16</sup> May we live our lives to prepare for that humble moment is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 48; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 37; Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–33; Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 17.
2. “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 4, 10.
3. Albert Choules Jr., unpublished minutes of Seventy Quorum’s meeting, 15 Apr. 1993.
4. *The Screwtape Letters* (1982), 62–63.
5. Matthew 18:1, 4.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Quoted in Truman G. Madsen, “Hugh B. Brown—Youthful Veteran,” *New Era*, Apr. 1976, 16.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 6; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 6.
9. *Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. (1960), 95.
10. 2 Nephi 33:11.
11. John 3:30.
12. See Mormon 9:31.
13. Moses 1:10.
14. *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (1903–12), 5:331.
15. Micah 6:8.
16. See Mosiah 27:31; D&C 88:104.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Come, Come, Ye Saints.”

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## Sister Sydney S. Reynolds

### A God of miracles

With Moroni of old, I believe in a God of miracles. Moroni wrote to the people of our dispensation, “Behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, . . . and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are” (Mormon 9:11). Moroni proclaimed that Jesus Christ did many mighty miracles, that many mighty miracles were wrought by the hands of the Apostles, and that a God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever must be a God of miracles today (see Mormon 9:9, 18–19).

### Mighty miracles

Think of the miracles of the Old Testament. Remember Moses and the parting of the Red Sea. For all future generations of Israelites, the great miracles that led to their deliverance from Egypt provided undeniable proof of God’s existence and His love for them.

Many Book of Mormon prophets, including Nephi, pointed to the story of Moses to encourage faith and belief in a God who could deliver His people in their distress (see 1 Nephi 4:1–3). Other Book of Mormon prophets reminded the people that they themselves had witnessed miracles that should convince them of God’s power.

In the New Testament, the Apostle John shared his reason for recording many of the Savior’s miracles—namely, “that [we] might believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31).

In this dispensation we witness the great miracle of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. It began when a young boy entered a grove of trees near Palmyra, New York, and poured out his heart and his questions to a God he believed could answer him—the God of miracles. And miracles have followed in this dispensation—mighty miracles—including the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which is itself another testament of Jesus Christ.



### Smaller, private miracles

Just as important as these “mighty miracles” are the smaller “private miracles” that teach each of us to have faith in the Lord. These come as we recognize and heed the promptings of the Spirit in our lives.

I am grateful for a teacher who encouraged his students to keep a journal of the whisperings or promptings of the Spirit in their lives. He directed us to record what we felt and what resulted. Little things became evident.

One day I was frantically trying to complete some assignments and prepare for a trip. I had just been down to the laundry area of the dorm to move my clothes from the washer to the dryer. Unfortunately, all the dryers were in use, and they all had many minutes to go. I went back upstairs discouraged, knowing that by the time those dryers finished, I had to be on the road. I had barely returned to my room when I felt prompted to go back downstairs and check the laundry again. *Foolishness*, I thought—I had just been there, and I didn’t have time. But because I was trying to listen, I went. Two of the dryers were empty—and I was able to meet all my commitments.

Could the Lord possibly have been concerned about smoothing my way in such a small but, to me, important matter? I have learned since, through many such experiences, that the Lord will help us in every aspect of our lives when we are trying to serve Him and do His will.

I believe that all of us can bear witness to these small miracles. We know children who pray for help to find a lost item and find it. We know of young people who gather the courage to stand as witnesses of God and feel His sustaining hand. We know friends who pay their tithing with the last of their money and then, through a miracle, find themselves able to pay their tuition or their rent or somehow obtain food for their family. We can share experiences of prayers an-

swered and priesthood blessings that gave courage, brought comfort, or restored health. These daily miracles acquaint us with the hand of the Lord in our lives.

### Miracles in the lives of premature twins

My mind has been much on this topic because of an experience our family has had in the last few months. Our daughter and her husband took a while to find each other, and then, though they wanted children with all their hearts, for a number of years they had difficulty realizing that dream. They prayed and sought priesthood blessings and medical help and eventually were thrilled to learn they were expecting twins.

Things did not go smoothly, however, and three and a half months before the babies were due to arrive, the mother-to-be found herself in the labor and delivery section of the hospital. The doctors at first were hopeful that they could stop the labor for a few more weeks. Quickly, however, the question became, would they even have the 48 hours necessary for medication to prepare the babies’ immature lungs to function?

A nurse came in from the newborn intensive care unit to show the couple pictures of the machines the babies would be hooked up to if they were born alive. She explained the risks for eye damage, for lung collapse, for physical impairment, for brain damage. The couple listened, humbled yet hopeful, and then, despite all the doctors could do, it was obvious that these babies were coming.

They were born alive. First the baby girl and then the baby boy—weighing less than four pounds together—were rushed to the intensive care unit and put on ventilators, with umbilical tubes and intravenous lines and constant attention. They couldn’t have too much light; they couldn’t have too much noise; their chemical balances needed constant monitoring as the hospital, with millions of dollars of equipment and many wonderful doctors and

nurses, attempted to replicate the miracle of a mother's womb.

There were multitudes of little miracles every day: a collapsed lung healed and then, despite the odds, continued to function properly; pneumonia was beaten back; more deadly infections invaded and were overcome; IV lines went bad and were replaced. After two and a half months, the baby boy had gained two pounds and could breathe with an oxygen supplement. His ventilator was gone, he learned to eat, and his grateful parents took him home with monitors attached.

### **Praying and fasting for one more miracle**

The baby girl kept pulling her ventilator tube out, setting off alarms across the nursery. Maybe she wanted to keep up with her brother, we thought, but her throat closed off each time, and she just couldn't breathe on her own. Her throat was so inflamed that at times the respiratory therapists had great difficulty reinserting the tube, and she almost died. Her normal progress was stymied by her continued dependence on the ventilator.

Finally, after her baby brother had been home for two months, the doctors felt they were forced to suggest surgery for her—a surgery that would allow her to breathe by opening a hole in her throat, a surgery that might solve the stomach problems by opening a hole in her side, but a surgery that would impact her little body for many months and maybe for the rest of her life. As the parents wrestled with this decision, a beloved aunt sent a message to all the family. She explained the situation—the critical issue of timing, the importance of getting off the ventilator—and suggested that we join our faith once again, and in prayer and fasting ask for one more miracle—if it was the Lord's will. We would culminate our fast with a prayer the evening of December 3.

Let me read from a letter that was sent to the family the morning of December 4. "Dearest Family, Wonderful news!

Blessings from the Lord. Our heartfelt thanks for your prayers and fasting in behalf of our little girl. Yesterday morning she came off the ventilator and has been off for 24 hours at this writing. To us it is a miracle. The medical staff are still guarded about predicting the future, but we are so grateful to the Lord and to you. We are praying that this will mark the beginning of the end of her hospital stay. And we even dare to hope that she'll be home for Christmas."

She did make it home for Christmas, and both babies are currently doing just fine. Our family has had its own "parting of the Red Sea," and we are prepared to testify that there is today, as there was yesterday and will be forever, a "God of miracles" who loves His children and desires to bless them.

### **The greatest of all God's miracles**

Now, we know, as you do, that all petitions to the Lord and all fasts do not receive this same hoped-for answer. Our extended family also has faced the death of loved ones, serious illness, the trial of divorce, and children who are choosing another path. We do not always understand the reasons behind the tests that come with mortality. But our faith has grown, and perhaps yours has too, as we have watched loved ones, friends, and people we know only by reputation endure with faith in the Lord the most severe trials. They too know the God of miracles and witness in their extremity that whatever the future holds for them, the Lord knows them and loves them and is blessing them. They are sealed to Him and to each other forever, and they are willing to submit their wills to His.

How have they come to such a point? How do we access the quiet miracle that the Lord works as He transforms us, His children, into worthy heirs of the kingdom of God? I believe it is made possible because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that who-

soever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). I believe it comes as we yield to the enticings of the Spirit, put off the natural man, and are filled with the love of God (see Mosiah 3:19). "Through the Atonement of [Jesus] Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). All mankind—that includes me, that

includes you—we can each have part in the Atonement, the greatest of all God's miracles.

God did part the Red Sea, and He did give us the Book of Mormon. He can heal us of our sins, and He can and will bless us, His children, in our daily lives. I know that He lives and loves us and is today a God of miracles, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### **"Ye shall be witnesses unto me"**

As the resurrected Jesus concluded His earthly ministry, He gave this paramount charge to His Apostles and those who would follow them:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

"Ye shall receive power, . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."<sup>2</sup>

Remembering always to act with courtesy and propriety, we have a responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ "at all times and in all things, and in all places,"<sup>3</sup> to proclaim each in our own way the great cause to which Christ has called us.

### **Be a vast army in assisting missionaries**

Now, you are already wonderful missionaries, better than you think you are, and there is more where that comes from! The 12-hour-a-day, heavy-duty effort we'll leave to the full-time missionaries, but why should they have all the fun? We are entitled to a seat at the abundant table of testimony as well, and fortunately a place has been reserved there for each member of the Church.

Indeed, one of the axioms of our day is that no mission or missionaries can ul-

timately succeed *without* the loving participation and spiritual support of the local members working with them in a balanced effort. If today you are taking notes on a stone tablet, chisel that one in deeply. I promise you won't ever have to erase it. Initial investigators may come from many different sources, but those who are actually baptized and who are firmly retained in activity in the Church come overwhelmingly from friends and acquaintances known to members of the Church.

Just over 24 months ago President Gordon B. Hinckley said in a Church-wide broadcast:

"My heart reaches out to you missionaries. You simply cannot do it alone and do it well. You must have the help of others. That power to help lies within each of us. . . .

"Now, my brethren and sisters, we can let the missionaries try to do it alone, or we can help them. If they do it alone, they will knock on doors day after day and the harvest will be meager. Or as members we can assist them in finding and teaching investigators. . . .

"Brothers and sisters, all of you out in the wards and stakes and in the districts and branches, I invite you to become a vast army with enthusiasm for this work and a great overarching desire to assist the missionaries in the tremendous responsibility they have to carry the

gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”<sup>4</sup>

I like the ring of those phrases “a vast army with enthusiasm for this work” and “a great overarching desire to assist the missionaries.” Let me note a number of things we can do to respond to that call. You will recognize how many of them you are already doing.

### **Set an example by living the gospel**

Above all else we can live the gospel. Surely there is no more powerful missionary message we can send to this world than the example of a loving and happy Latter-day Saint life. The manner and bearing, the smile and kindness of a faithful member of the Church brings a warmth and an outreach that no missionary tract or videotape can convey. People do not join the Church because of what they know. They join because of what they feel, what they see and want spiritually. Our spirit of testimony and happiness in that regard will come through to others if we let it. As the Lord said to Alma and the sons of Mosiah, “Go forth . . . that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instrument of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls.”<sup>5</sup>

A young returned missionary sister from Hong Kong told me recently that when she and her companion asked an investigator if she believed in God, the woman replied, “I didn’t until I met a member of your church and observed how she lived.” What exemplary missionary work! Asking every member to be a missionary is not nearly as crucial as asking every member to be a member! Thank you for living the gospel.

### **Pray for missionary work**

Thank you also for praying for the missionaries. *Everyone* prays for the missionaries. May it ever be so. In that same

spirit, we should also pray for those who are (or who need to be) meeting the missionaries. In Zarahemla, members were commanded to “join in fasting and mighty prayer”<sup>6</sup> for those who had not yet joined the Church of God. We can do the same.

We can also pray daily for our own personal missionary experiences. Pray that under the divine management of such things, the missionary opportunity you want is already being prepared in the heart of someone who longs for and looks for what you have. “There are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.”<sup>7</sup> Pray that they will find you! And then be alert, because there are multitudes in your world who feel a famine in their lives, “not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Listen, and you’ll know what to say**

When the Lord delivers this person to your view, just chat—about anything. You can’t miss. You don’t have to have a prescribed missionary message. Your faith, your happiness, the very look on your face is enough to quicken the honest in heart. Haven’t you ever heard a grandmother talk about her grandchildren? That’s what I mean—minus the photographs! The gospel will just tumble out. You won’t be able to contain yourself!

But perhaps even more important than speaking is listening. These people are not lifeless objects disguised as a baptismal statistic. They are children of God, our brothers and sisters, and they need what we have. Be genuine. Reach out sincerely. Ask these friends what matters most to *them*. What do *they* cherish, and what do *they* hold dear? And then listen. If the setting is right, you might ask what their fears are, what they yearn for, or what they feel is missing in their lives.

I promise you that *something* in what they say will *always* highlight a truth of the gospel about which you can bear testimony and about which you can then offer more. Elder Russell Nelson told me once that one of the first rules of medical inquiry is "Ask the patient where it hurts. The patient," he said, "will be your best guide to a correct diagnosis and eventual remedy." If we listen with love, we won't need to wonder what to say. It will be given to us—by the Spirit and by our friends.

For those who find it difficult to initiate missionary conversations—and many do—the Church's newly produced pass-along cards are a lovely, effortless way to let others know some of your basic beliefs and how they may learn more. For example, this is the easiest way I personally have yet found to offer people a copy of the Book of Mormon without my needing to carry a knapsack full of books as I travel.

### **Prepare for senior missionary service**

Now let me increase the tempo of this message just a little. Many more of us can prepare for senior missionary service when that time in our life comes. As the senior couples at the MTC in Provo have said on a poster, "Let's lengthen our shuffle!" I just returned from a long trip which took me to half a dozen missions. Everywhere I went during those weeks, I found senior couples giving the most remarkable and rewarding leadership imaginable, providing stability, maturity, and experience that no 19-year-old or 21-year-old could possibly be expected to provide. I found all kinds of couples, including a few former mission and temple presidents and their wives, who had come to parts of the world totally unknown to them to quietly, selflessly serve a second or a third or a fourth mission. I was deeply moved by every one of those people.

### **Service of Elder and Sister Hess**

I had lunch recently with Elder and Sister John Hess of Ashton, Idaho. "We're just old potato farmers," John told me, but that is precisely what the nation of Belarus in the Lithuania Vilnius Mission needed. For years the very best potato yields on government plots of ground there had been 50 sacks of potatoes a hectare. Considering it takes 22 sacks of seed to plant a hectare, the return was poor indeed. They needed help.

Brother Hess asked for ground just three feet away from the government plots, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work with the same seed, tools, and fertilizer available in Belarus. Come harvest time they began to dig, then called on others to dig, then called on everyone to dig. With the same rainfall and soil, but with an extra measure of Idaho industry, experience, and prayer, the plots planted by the Hesses produced a whopping 550 sacks per hectare—11 times better than any prior yield on that land. At first no one would believe the difference. They wondered if secret teams had come in the night or if some wonder drug had been used. But it was none of that. Brother Hess said, "We needed a miracle, so we asked for one." Now just little more than a year later, in that community young proselyting missionaries are finding much more success just because an "old potato farmer" from Idaho answered the call of his church.

### **A family sacrifices for a daughter to serve**

Most missionary couples serve much more routinely than that, employing their leadership experience in wards and branches, but the point is that there are all kinds of needs in this work, and there is a resolute missionary tradition of responding to the call to serve at *every* age and in every circumstance. I learned from a mission president recently that one of

his young sister missionaries, nearing the end of her very faithful and successful mission, said through her tears that she must return home immediately. When he inquired as to the problem, she told him money had become so difficult for her family that to continue her support, the family had rented their home and were using the rental proceeds to pay her mission expenses. For living accommodations, they had moved into a storage locker. For water, they used a neighbor's outdoor tap and hose; and for a bathroom they went to a nearby gasoline station. This family, in which the father had recently passed away, was so proud of their missionary and so independent in spirit that they had managed to keep this recent turn of events from most of their friends and virtually all of their Church leaders.

When this situation was discovered, the family was restored to their home immediately. Long-term solutions to their economic circumstances were put in place, and the complete amount of remaining missionary support for their missionary daughter was secured overnight. With her tears dried and fears allayed, this faithful, hardworking young sister finished her mission triumphantly and was recently married in the temple to a wonderful young man.

In our blessed day we do not ask the kind of severe sacrifice this missionary family offered, but our generation has been the beneficiary of earlier generations who *did* sacrifice so very much in serving the missionary cause we declare. We can all do just a little more to pass that tradition on to those who follow us.

### Bringing souls to God is the greatest work

The Apostle John asked the Lord if he, John, might remain on the earth beyond the normal span of life for no other purpose than to bring more souls unto God. In granting that wish, the Savior

said that this was "a greater work" and a nobler "desire" even than that of desiring to come into the presence of the Lord "speedily."<sup>9</sup>

Like all prophets and apostles, the Prophet Joseph Smith understood the deep meaning of John's request when he said, "After all that has been said, [our] greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel."<sup>10</sup> I bear witness of that gospel and of Jesus Christ, who embodied it. I testify that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God"<sup>11</sup> and that saving those souls through the redeeming Atonement of His Beloved Son is at the very heart of His work and His glory.<sup>12</sup> In pursuing that work I testify with Jeremiah that this last great missionary declaration to modern Israel will, in the end, be a greater miracle than ancient Israel's crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>13</sup> That we will courageously and enthusiastically share the miracle of this message, I pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19.
2. Acts 1:8.
3. Mosiah 18:9.
4. "Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 106–7, 110.
5. Alma 17:11.
6. Alma 6:6.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
8. Amos 8:11.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 7.
10. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 113.
11. D&C 18:10.
12. See Moses 1:39.
13. See Jeremiah 16:14–16.

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The choir sang "Come unto Jesus."

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### President Faust

The choir has just sung "Come unto Jesus."

As you leave this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in your driving.

We express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be

our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The benediction will be offered by Elder Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Compassion in Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is a most interesting place. In company with Elders Richard G. Scott, Rex D. Pinegar, and Larry W. Gibbons, I presided at a regional conference there just a short time ago. The facility in which we met was packed with members of the Church and other interested persons. The singing by the choir was heavenly, the spoken word inspiring, and the sweet spirit which prevailed during the conference will long be remembered.

I reflected on my previous visits to this location, the beauty of the state song—"Oklahoma," from the musical production of Rodgers and Hammerstein—and the wonderful hospitality of the people there.

This community's spirit of compassionate help was tested in the extreme, however, on April 19, 1995, when a terrorist-planted bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, taking 168 persons to their deaths and injuring countless others.

Following the regional conference in Oklahoma City, I was driven to the entrance of a beautiful and symbolic memorial which graces the area where the Murrah building once stood. It was a dreary, rainy day, which tended to underscore the pain and suffering which had occurred there. The memorial features a 400-foot reflecting pool. On one side of the pool are 168 empty glass and granite

chairs in honor of each of the people killed. These are placed, as far as can be determined, where the fallen bodies were found.

On the opposite side of the pool there stands, on a gentle rise of ground, a mature American elm tree—the only nearby tree to survive the destruction. It is appropriately and affectionately named "The Survivor Tree." In regal splendor it honors those who survived the horrific blast.

My host directed my attention to the inscription above the gate of the memorial:

We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence.

May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity.

He then, with tears in his eyes and with a faltering voice, declared, "This community, and all the churches and citizens in it, have been galvanized together. In our grief we have become strong. In our spirit we have become united."

We concluded that the best word to describe what had taken place was *compassion*.

### Joseph of old exemplified compassion

My thoughts turned to the musical play *Camelot*. King Arthur, in his dream

of a better world, an ideal relationship one with another, said, as he envisioned the purpose of the Round Table, "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness."

A stirring account which illustrates this statement is found in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. Joseph was especially loved by his father, Jacob, which occasioned bitterness and jealousy on the part of his brothers. There followed the plot to slay Joseph, which eventually placed Joseph in a deep pit without food or water to sustain life. Upon the arrival of a passing caravan of merchants, Joseph's brothers determined to sell Joseph rather than leaving him to die. Twenty pieces of silver extricated Joseph from the pit and placed him eventually in the house of Potiphar in the land of Egypt. There Joseph prospered, for "the Lord was with Joseph."<sup>1</sup>

After the years of plenty, there followed the years of famine. In the midst of this latter period, when the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt to buy corn, they were blessed by this favored man in Egypt—even their own brother. Joseph could have dealt harshly with his brothers for the callous and cruel treatment he had earlier received from them. However, he was kind and gracious to them, and he won their favor and support with these words and actions:

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . .

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."<sup>2</sup>

Joseph exemplified the magnificent virtue of compassion.

### **The good Samaritan's compassion**

During the meridian of time, when Jesus walked the dusty pathways of the Holy Land, He often spoke in parables. Said He:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

"And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

Well could the Savior say to us, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

No doubt our response would be, "He that shewed mercy on him."

Now, as then, Jesus would say to us, "Go, and do thou likewise."<sup>3</sup>

### **Jesus' unlimited capacity for compassion**

Jesus provided us many examples of compassionate concern. The crippled man at the pool of Bethesda; the woman taken in adultery; the woman at Jacob's well; the daughter of Jairus; Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha—each represented a casualty on the Jericho road. Each needed help.

To the cripple at Bethesda, Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."<sup>4</sup> To the sinful woman came the counsel, "Go, and sin no more."<sup>5</sup> To help her who came to draw water, He provided a well of water "springing up into everlasting life."<sup>6</sup> To the dead daughter of Jairus



came the command, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."<sup>7</sup> To the entombed Lazarus, "Come forth."<sup>8</sup>

The Savior has always shown unlimited capacity for compassion.

On this, the American continent, Jesus appeared to a multitude and said:

"Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. . . .

" . . . And he did heal them every one."<sup>9</sup>

#### **A couple shows compassion for a traveler**

One may well ask the penetrating question: These accounts pertain to the Redeemer of the world. Can there actually occur in my own life, on my own Jericho road, such a treasured experience?

I phrase my answer in the words of the Master, "Come and see."<sup>10</sup>

We have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler who needs our help may be one unknown.

Genuine gratitude was expressed by the writer of a letter received some time ago at Church headquarters. No return address was shown, no name, but the postmark was from Portland, Oregon:

"To the Office of the First Presidency:

"Salt Lake City showed me Christian hospitality once during my wandering years.

"On a cross-country journey by bus to California, I stepped down in the terminal in Salt Lake City, sick and trembling from aggravated loss of sleep caused by a lack of necessary medication. In my headlong flight from a bad situation in Boston, I had completely forgotten my supply.

"In the Temple Square Hotel restaurant, I sat dejectedly. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a couple approach my table. 'Are you all right, young man?' the woman asked. I raised up, crying and a bit shaken, related my story and the predicament I was in then. They listened carefully and patiently to my nearly incoherent ramblings, and then they took charge. They spoke with the restaurant manager, then told me I could have all I wanted to eat there for five days. They took me next door to the hotel desk and got me a room for five days. Then they drove me to a clinic and saw that I was provided with the medications I needed—truly my basic lifeline to sanity and comfort.

"While I was recuperating and building my strength, I made it a point to attend the daily Tabernacle organ recitals. The celestial voicing of that instrument from the faintest intonation to the mighty full organ is the most sublime sonority of my acquaintance. I have acquired albums and tapes of the Tabernacle organ and the choir which I can rely upon any time to soothe and buttress a sagging spirit.

"On my last day at the hotel, before I resumed my journey, I turned in my key; and there was a message for me from that couple: 'Repay us by showing gentle kindness to some other troubled soul along your road.' That was my habit, but I determined to be more keenly on the lookout for someone who needed a lift in life.

"I wish you well. I don't know if these are indeed the 'latter days' spoken of in the scriptures, but I do know that two members of your church were saints to me in my desperate hours of need. I just thought you might like to know."

What an example of caring compassion.

#### **A caregiver's compassion**

At one privately owned and operated care facility, compassion reigned su-

preme. The proprietress was Edna Hewlett. There was a waiting list of patients who desired to live out their remaining days under her tender care, for she was an angelic person. She would wash and style the hair of every patient. She cleansed elderly bodies and dressed them with bright and clean clothing.

Through the years, in visiting the widows of the ward over which I once presided, I would generally start my visits at Edna's facility. She would welcome me with a cheery smile and take me to the living room where a number of the patients were seated. I always had to begin with Jeannie Burt, who was the oldest—102 when she died. She had known me and my family from the time I was born.

On one occasion, Jeannie asked with her thick Scottish brogue, "Tommy, have you been to Edinburgh lately?"

I replied, "Yes, not too long ago I was there."

"Isn't it beautiful!" she responded.

Jeannie closed her aged eyes in an expression of silent reverie. Then she became serious. "I've paid in advance for my funeral—in cash. You are to speak at my funeral and you are to recite 'Crossing the Bar' by Tennyson. Now let's hear it!"

It seemed every eye was upon me, and surely this was the case. I took a deep breath and began:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the  
bar,  
When I put out to sea.<sup>11</sup>

Jeannie's smile was benign and heavenly—then she declared, "Oh, Tommy, that was nice. But see that you practice a wee bit before my funeral!" This I did.

### Care for those who suffer

At some period in our mortal mission, there appears the faltering step, the wan smile, the pain of sickness—even the

fading of summer, the approach of autumn, the chill of winter, and the experience we call death, which comes to all. It comes to the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey. Often it hushes the laughter of little children.

Throughout the world there is enacted daily the sorrowful scene of loved ones mourning as they bid farewell to a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, or a cherished friend.

From the cruel cross, the Savior's tender words of farewell to His mother are particularly poignant:

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."<sup>12</sup>

Let us remember that after the funeral flowers fade, the well-wishes of friends become memories and the prayers offered and words spoken dim in the corridors of the mind. Those who grieve frequently find themselves alone. Missed is the laughter of children, the commotion of teenagers, and the tender, loving concern of a departed companion. The clock ticks more loudly, time passes more slowly, and four walls can indeed a prison make.

I extol those who, with loving care and compassionate concern, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

### Compassion of the Father and the Son

In our Father's compassion and according to His divine plan, holy temples bring to His children the peace which surpasses understanding.

Today, under the leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the number of new temples constructed and under con-

struction staggers the mind to contemplate. Heavenly Father's compassionate concern for His children here on earth and for those who have gone beyond mortality merits our gratitude.

Thanks be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His life, for His gospel, for His example, and for His blessed Atonement.

I return in my thoughts to Oklahoma City. To me, it is beyond mere coincidence that now a temple of the Lord, in all its beauty, stands in that city as a heaven-sent beacon to mark the way to joy here on earth and eternal joy hereafter. Let us remember the words from the Psalms: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."<sup>13</sup>

In a very real way the Master speaks to us: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."<sup>14</sup>

Let us listen for His knock. Let us open the door of our hearts, that He—the living example of true compassion—

may enter, I sincerely pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Genesis 39:2; see also Genesis 37:3–36.
2. Genesis 45:5, 7; see also Genesis 41:57; 42:3; 45:10–11.
3. See Luke 10:30–37.
4. John 5:8.
5. John 8:11.
6. See John 4:14.
7. Mark 5:41.
8. John 11:43.
9. 3 Nephi 17:7, 9.
10. John 1:39.
11. "Crossing the Bar," lines 1–4.
12. John 19:26–27.
13. Psalm 30:5.
14. Revelation 3:20.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Stephen B. Oveson offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a combined choir from Ricks College. Eda Ashby and Randy Kempton directed the choir. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

#### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B.

Hinckley, who presides at this session, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from Ricks College, under the direction of Eda Ashby and Randy Kempton, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Come, Rejoice." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Rejoice."

Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the invocation.

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### **President Faust**

The choir will now sing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of

the Church for sustaining vote. Brother Wesley Jones, managing director of the Church Auditing Department, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 2000.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

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## **The Sustaining of Church Officers**

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My dear brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Claudio R. M. Costa, Richard J. Maynes, L. Whitney Clayton, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, and Steven E. Snow as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Keith K. Hilbig, Robert F. Orton, Wayne S. Peterson, R. Conrad Schultz, Robert R. Steuer, and H. Ross Workman. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies: Salvador Aguirre, Daniel P. Alvarez, David J. Barnett, Oscar W. Chavez, Craig C. Christensen, Carl B. Cook, R. Michael Duffin, Timothy Dyches, Michael H. Holmes, Richard D. May, Joel H. McKinnon, Jorge Mendez, Marcus B. Nash, Timothy M. Olson, Richard G. Peterson,

Gary L. Pocock, Armando A. Sierra, Gary M. Stewart, G. Perrin Walker, Robert B. White, Larry Y. Wilson, and Kazuhiko Yamashita. All in favor will please manifest it by raising the right hand. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. All in

favor may manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

We shall now ask that the newly called members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy take their places on the stand.

## Church Auditing Department Report for 2000

### Wesley L. Jones

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains a functioning, standards-driven auditing department. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations. The managing director of the Church Auditing Department reports directly and regularly to the First Presidency. Church Auditing Department staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other qualified and credentialed professionals.

Risk is the primary factor governing the scheduling, performance, and reporting of audits. As mandated by the First Presidency, the Church Auditing Department has authority to audit all Church departments, functions, and operations worldwide and has access to all records, financial statements and reports, personnel, facilities, and physical properties relevant to the performance of audits. The frequency and nature of audits are determined by Church Auditing Department executives.

Professional auditing standards promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants guide audit work. The Church Auditing Department audits the various financial statements

and operations of the Church in accordance with these recognized professional auditing standards. This includes overseeing the auditing of contributions and expenditures from local ecclesiastical units.

Expenditures of Church funds for the year ended December 31, 2000, were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes in accordance with written policy. The Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation.

Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees. In the year 2000 the Church Auditing Department audited the financial policies and procedures that provide controls over these contributions and expenditures of Church funds and that safeguard Church assets. Budgeting, controllership, accounting and reporting systems, and management's corrective action plan progress for audit comments raised were audited and reported.

Based on our performance of risk-based audits of financial, operational, budgeting, and other controls and our evaluation of management's responsiveness to implementing corrective action plans, the Church Auditing Department

is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received and expended during the year ended December 31, 2000, have been managed in accordance with approved budgetary guidelines and established Church policies and procedures.

Church-affiliated businesses, including Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries, are operated separately from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The managers of these Church-affiliated businesses report to independent boards of directors and their

respective audit committees. The financial and operational activities of these affiliated organizations were not audited by the Church Auditing Department in 2000. However, we have verified that these organizations, as well as Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education, are being subjected to a financial statement audit annually by independent public accounting firms.

Respectfully submitted,

Auditing Department  
Wesley L. Jones  
Managing Director

## Church Statistical Report for 2000

### F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, for the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report concerning the membership growth and standing of the Church as of December 31, 2000. These statistics are based on reports available prior to the conference.

### Church units

Stakes .....	2,581
Districts .....	621
Missions .....	334
Wards and branches .....	25,915

### Church membership

Total membership .....	11,068,861
Increase in children of record during 2000 .....	81,450
Converts baptized during 2000 ..	273,973

### Missionaries

Full-time missionaries .....	60,784
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### Temples

Temples dedicated during 2000 .....	34
Temples in operation .....	102

### Prominent members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Hugh W. Pinnock*, a member of the Seventy; *Elder Bernard P. Brockbank*, an emeritus General Authority; *Wilford W. Kirton Jr.*, former Church general counsel.

### President Faust

We will now hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and then from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve. They will be followed by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy.

## President Boyd K. Packer

This matter of sustaining the officers is a great protection to the Church. The Lord commanded "that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been [duly] ordained by the heads of the church."<sup>1</sup> In this way members of the Church in every organization all over the world know who the true messengers are.

### Healing the spiritual pain of guilt

It is my purpose to ease the pain of those who suffer from the very unpleasant feeling of guilt. I feel like the doctor who begins his treatment by saying, "Now, this may hurt a little . . ."

Every one of us has at least tasted the pain of conscience which follows our mistakes.

John said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>2</sup> Then he said it more strongly: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make [the Lord] a liar, and his word is not in us."<sup>3</sup>

All of us sometime, and some of us much of the time, suffer remorse of conscience from things we did wrong or things left undone. That feeling of guilt is to the spirit what pain is to the physical body.

But guilt can be harder to bear than physical pain. Physical pain is nature's warning system that signals something needs to be changed or cleansed or treated, perhaps even removed by surgery. Guilt, the pain of our conscience, cannot be healed the same way.

### Descriptions of the pain of guilt

If you are burdened with depressing feelings of guilt or disappointment, of

failure or shame, there is a cure. My intent is not to hurt your tender feelings but to help you and help those you love. The prophets teach how painful guilt can be. As I read what they have said, be prepared for *very* strong words. Even so, I will not read the strongest things they have said.

The prophet Alma, describing his feelings of guilt, said, "I was *racked* with eternal *torment*, for my soul was *harrowed up* to the greatest degree and *racked* with all my sins."<sup>4</sup>

The prophets chose very graphic words.

*Racked* means "tortured."<sup>5</sup> Anciently a rack was a framework on which the victim was laid with each ankle and wrist tied to a spindle which could then be turned to cause unbearable pain.

A harrow is a frame with spikes through it. When pulled across the ground, it rips and tears into the soil. The scriptures frequently speak of souls and minds being "harrowed up" with guilt.<sup>6</sup>

*Torment* means "to twist," a means of torture so painful that even the innocent would confess.<sup>7</sup>

The prophets speak of the "gall of bitterness"<sup>8</sup> and often compare the pain of guilt to fire and brimstone. *Brimstone* is another name for sulfur.

King Benjamin said that those who are evil will be "consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment."<sup>9</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. . . . The torment of disappointment in the mind of man [or woman] is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone."<sup>10</sup>

That lake of fire and brimstone, ever burning but never consumed, is the description in the scriptures for hell.<sup>11</sup>

## The Atonement offers relief and peace

Suppose there was no cure, no way to ease spiritual pain or to erase the agony of guilt. Suppose each mistake, each sin was added to the others with the racking, the harrowing up, the torment going on forever. Too many of us needlessly carry burdens of guilt and shame.

The scriptures teach that there "must needs be . . . opposition in all things." If not, "righteousness could not be brought to pass,"<sup>12</sup> neither happiness, nor joy, neither redemption.

The third article of faith teaches, "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." The Atonement offers redemption from spiritual death and from suffering caused by sin.

For some reason we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."<sup>13</sup>

The gospel plan is the "great plan of happiness."<sup>14</sup> It is contrary to the nature of God and contrary to the very nature of man to find happiness in sin. "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>15</sup>

We know that some anxiety and depression is caused by physical disorders, but much (perhaps most) of it is not pain of the body but of the spirit. Spiritual pain resulting from guilt can be replaced with peace of mind.

## The healing power of the Atonement

In contrast to the hard words condemning sin, listen to the calming, heal-

ing words of *mercy*, which balance the harsher words of *justice*. Alma said:

"My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but . . . my soul is pained no more."<sup>16</sup>

"I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. . . .

"And . . . as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

"Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

"And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!"<sup>17</sup>

We all make mistakes. Sometimes we harm ourselves and seriously injure others in ways that we alone cannot repair. We break things that we alone cannot fix. It is then in our nature to feel guilt and humiliation and suffering, which we alone cannot cure. That is when the healing power of the Atonement will help.

The Lord said, "Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent."<sup>18</sup>

If Christ had not made His Atonement, the penalties for mistakes would be added one on the other. Life would be hopeless. But He willingly sacrificed in order that we may be redeemed. And He said, "Behold, he who has repented of his



sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>19</sup>

Ezekiel said: "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him."<sup>20</sup>

Think of that—not even mentioned!

We can even "retain a remission of [our] sins."<sup>21</sup> Baptism by immersion is for the remission of our sins. That covenant can be renewed by partaking of the sacrament each week.<sup>22</sup>

### Apply the Atonement in everyday life

The Atonement has practical, personal, everyday value; apply it in your life. It can be activated with so simple a beginning as prayer. You will not thereafter be free from trouble and mistakes but can erase the guilt through repentance and be at peace.

I quoted the third article of faith. It has two parts: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved." Then the conditions: "by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."

Justice requires that there be a punishment.<sup>23</sup> Guilt is not erased without pain. There are laws to obey and ordinances to receive, and there are penalties to pay.

Physical pain requires treatment and a change in lifestyle.

So it is with spiritual pain. There must be repentance and discipline, most of which is self-discipline. But to restore our innocence after serious transgressions, there must be confession to our bishop, who is the appointed judge.

The Lord promised, "A new heart . . . will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."<sup>24</sup> That spiritual heart surgery, like in the body, may cause you pain and require a change in habits and conduct.

But in both cases, recovery brings renewed life and peace of mind.

### The ever-present power of the Atonement

When the heavens were opened and the Father and the Son stood before Joseph Smith, the Father spoke seven words: "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>25</sup> Revelation followed revelation, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints<sup>26</sup> was organized. The Savior Himself declared it to be "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."<sup>27</sup>

Peter, James, and John restored the higher priesthood, and John the Baptist the Aaronic Priesthood. The fulness of the gospel was revealed.

Following the revelations which came and yet come to His Church, all that has been printed or preached or sung or built or taught or broadcast has been to the end that men and women and children can know the redeeming influence of the Atonement of Christ in their everyday lives and be at peace.

He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."<sup>28</sup>

As one who stands among His Apostles, I testify of Him and of the ever-present power of His Atonement.

### The touch of the Master's hand

From the lofty words of *justice* and *mercy* and of *warning* and *hope* in the verses of scripture, I turn to the very same message in verses of a simple poem:

'Twas battered and scarred, and the  
auctioneer  
Thought it scarcely worth his while  
To waste much time on the old violin,  
But held it up with a smile:  
"What am I bidden, good folks,"  
he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"  
"A dollar, a dollar"; then, "Two!"  
"Only two?"

Two dollars, and who'll make it three?

Three dollars, once; three dollars,  
twice;

Going for three—"But no,

From the room, far back, a gray-  
haired man

Came forward and picked up the bow;

Then, wiping the dust from the old  
violin,

And tightening the loose strings,

He played a melody pure and sweet

As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,

With a voice that was quiet and low,

Said, "What am I bid for the old  
violin?"

And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and who'll make  
it two?

Two thousand! And who'll make it  
three?

Three thousand, once, three thousand,  
twice,

And going, and gone!" said he.

The people cheered, but some of them  
cried,

"We do not quite understand  
What changed its worth." Swift came  
the reply:

"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,

And battered and scarred with sin,

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless  
crowd,

Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,

A game—and he travels on.

He's "going" once, and "going" twice,

He's "going" and almost "gone."

But the Master comes, and the foolish  
crowd

Never can quite understand

The worth of a soul and the change

that's wrought

By the touch of the Master's hand.<sup>29</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:11.
2. 1 John 1:8.
3. 1 John 1:10.
4. Alma 36:12; italics added.
5. See Mosiah 27:29; Alma 36:12, 16–17; Mormon 9:3.
6. See 2 Nephi 9:47; Alma 14:6; 15:3; 36:12, 17, 19; 39:7.
7. See Mosiah 2:39; 3:25; 5:5; Moroni 8:21.
8. See Alma 41:11; Acts 8:23; Mosiah 27:29; Alma 36:18; Mormon 8:31; Moroni 8:14.
9. Mosiah 3:25.
10. *Deseret News*, 8 July 1857, 138; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 357.
11. See Revelation 20:10; 21:8; 2 Nephi 9:16, 19, 26; 28:23; Jacob 3:11; 6:10; Mosiah 3:27; Alma 12:17; 14:14; Doctrine and Covenants 63:17; 76:36.
12. 2 Nephi 2:11.
13. Philippians 4:7.
14. Alma 42:8.
15. Alma 41:10; see also verse 11.
16. Mosiah 27:29.
17. Alma 36:13, 17–20.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
20. Ezekiel 33:15–16.
21. Mosiah 4:12; see also 2 Nephi 25:26; 31:17; Mosiah 3:13; 4:11; 15:11; Alma 4:14; 7:6; 12:34; 13:16; Helaman 14:13; 3 Nephi 12:2; 30:2; Moroni 8:25; 10:33.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:2.
23. See Alma 42:16–22.
24. Ezekiel 36:26.
25. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:4.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
28. John 14:27.
29. Myra Brooks Welch, "The Touch of the Master's Hand," *The Gospel Messenger*, Brethren Press, 26 Feb. 1921; see also *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People*, comp. Jack Lyon, et al. [1996], 182–83.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The need for mature missionary couples

I feel a deep responsibility to speak to you today about a pressing need in the Church. My greatest hope is that as I speak, the Holy Ghost will touch hearts, and somewhere a spouse or two will quietly nudge his or her companion, and a moment of truth will occur. I will speak on the urgent need for more mature couples to serve in the mission field. We wish to express our appreciation for all those valiant couples who are currently serving, those who have served, and those who will yet serve.

In the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord rebuked the preiding Brethren of the Church, saying:

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth. . . .

"And now a commandment I give unto you—if you will be delivered you shall set in order your own house" (D&C 93:40, 43).

What is the best way to teach our children and grandchildren light and truth? What is the most important way to set our families, both immediate and extended, in order? Is it possible that in spiritual matters our example speaks louder than our words? Temple marriage, family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening are all vitally important. But there is another dimension—the dimension of service. If we are willing to leave our loved ones for service in the mission field, we will bless them with a heritage that will teach and inspire them for generations to come.

It is significant to me that after commanding the Brethren to teach their children light and truth and set their families in order, the Lord immediately called them on missions. "Now, I say unto you, my friends, let my servant Sidney Rigdon go on his journey, and make haste, and also proclaim . . . the gospel of salvation" (D&C 93:51).

### Missionary service brings blessings

As we serve in the mission field, our children and grandchildren will be blessed in ways that would not have been possible had we stayed at home. Talk to couples who have served missions, and they will tell you of blessings poured out: inactive children activated, family members baptized, and testimonies strengthened because of their service.

One missionary couple left a farm at home for their son to manage. During the somewhat dry year that followed, their farm had two hay cuttings while the neighbor's had only one. The neighbor asked their son why he had two cuttings compared to their one. The young man replied, "You need to send your folks on a mission."

If the blessings for missionary couples and their families are so plentiful, why are only a few thousand serving instead of the tens of thousands that are so desperately needed? I believe the four "F's" often stand in their way: *Fear*, *Family concerns*, *Finances*, and *Finding the right mission opportunity*.

### Overcoming the impediment of fear

*First, fear.* Fear of the unknown or fear that we don't have the scriptural skills or language required can cause reluctance to serve. But the Lord has said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). Your life is your preparation. You have valuable experience. You have raised a family and served in the Church. Just go and be yourselves. The Lord has promised that angels will go before you (see D&C 103:19–20). You will be told by the Spirit what to say and when to say it in a very natural process as you strengthen young missionaries, testify to investigators and new members, teach leadership skills, and friendship and fellowship less-active members, help-

ing them return to full activity. *You* are the testimony, and you will touch the lives of those with whom you come in contact. Couples normally do not tract and are not expected to memorize discussions or maintain the same schedule as young elders and sisters. Simply be yourself. Serve to the best of your ability, and the Lord will bless you.

Missionary couples provide stability with their friendship and leadership skills in areas where the Church is in its infancy. I learned this firsthand while serving as a mission president in England. I assigned a couple who had been serving in the visitors' center to work in a small, struggling unit. They were somewhat fearful of having to leave the "safe haven" of the visitors' center. But with faith they went to work. Within six months, a unit that had 15 to 20 people coming to sacrament meeting had over 100 attending because of this couple's fellowshiping, working with the priesthood. To this day, they and their children refer to that time as the greatest experience of their lives.

Another couple recently served in a small village south of Santiago, Chile. They had no Spanish skills and were apprehensive about being in a different country so far from the comforts of home. But they plunged in with total dedication, loving and serving the people. Before long the small branch grew from 12 to 75 members. When it came time for them to leave, the entire branch rented a bus so they could go to the airport, four hours away, and say good-bye to their special friends.

The service that couples provide is essential to the work of the Lord. Couples can make a difference. Couples can accomplish remarkable things no one else can do.

### **Service of couples strengthens families**

*Second, family concerns.* The Savior called upon fishermen, entreating them,

"Follow me" (Matthew 4:19). He beseeched them to leave their familiar settings behind and become fishers of men. What is asked of couple missionaries is less than half a tithe of the time they will spend on earth. In the eternal perspective, a mission is but a few moments away from familiar settings, family, and having retirement fun with old friends.

The Lord will send special blessings to your family as you serve. "I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that I will provide for their families" (D&C 118:3). Couples are sometimes concerned that in their absence they will miss weddings, births, family reunions, and other family events. We have learned that the impact on families while grandparents are on missions is worth a thousand sermons. Families are greatly strengthened as they pray for their parents and grandparents and read letters sent home which share their testimonies and the contribution they are making in the mission field.

A son wrote a tender letter to his parents in the mission field:

"Your service sets an example for our children. As a result, they are more willing to serve in their callings in the Church. It teaches us all to be more charitable as we exchange letters and send packages. When we receive letters and news from you, it strengthens our testimonies. Even though you retired from your profession and should have been happy by all the world's standards, by going on your mission you have shown us a new way to be happy. You have found happiness money can't buy. We have seen you overcome medical and other types of adversities and have seen you blessed for your willingness to go and leave your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We love you dearly!"

Another couple reports: "One of our grandsons wrote to us while we were in Thailand and told us that he hadn't decided for sure that he wanted to fill a mission, but we had set the example for him

and now he knew he wanted to serve. He is now serving a mission."

My father and mother served a mission in England. As I visited them one day in their small flat, I watched my mother, with a shawl wrapped snugly around her shoulders, putting shillings in the gas meter to keep warm. I asked, "Why did you come on a mission, Mother?" She said simply, "Because I have 11 grandsons. I want them to know that Grandma and Grandpa served."

In 1830 the Lord called Thomas B. Marsh to leave his family and go into the mission field. Brother Marsh was greatly concerned about leaving his family at that time. In a tender revelation, the Lord told him: "I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones. . . . Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come. . . . Wherefore, your family shall live. . . . Go from them only for a little time, and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them" (D&C 31:2-3, 5-6). It is just possible that these are the blessings that are needed most for your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and future posterity.

### Resolving financial concerns

*Third, finances.* Some couples who would willingly serve are not able to do so because of age, health, finances, or family circumstances. Perhaps those who are not able to serve could assist another couple to go on a mission.

Missionary work has always involved sacrifice. If some sacrifices are necessary, then the blessings will be all the more abundant. Children, encourage your parents to serve and assist them with financial support if necessary. You may lose a baby-sitter for a short time, but the eternal rewards you and your family receive will more than compensate for the brief sacrifice.

To younger couples with children still at home, I urge you now to decide to serve in your later years and to plan and

prepare so you are financially, physically, and spiritually able. Make certain that the great example of missionary service is a heritage you will leave your posterity.

There are two unique times in our lives when we can truly live the law of consecration and devote ourselves in full-time service to the Lord. One is as a young man or woman serving a full-time mission. The other is the unique time you are given after having fulfilled the requirements of earning a living. The latter could be called the patriarchal years, when you can draw upon the rich experiences of a lifetime, go out as a couple, and consecrate yourselves fully as servants of the Lord.

The blessings of serving with your eternal companion are priceless and can be understood only by those who have experienced them. My wife and I have had that privilege in the mission field. Each day is a special day with daily rewards that cause personal growth and development in the Lord's time and in the Lord's way. The fulfillment that comes from this kind of service will bless you, your marriage, and your family for eternity.

### Finding the right mission opportunity

*Finally, finding the right mission opportunity.* The ways in which couples can serve are virtually limitless. From mission office support and leadership training to family history, temple work, and humanitarian service—there is an opportunity to use almost any skill or talent with which the Lord has blessed you.

Sit down with your companion, make an inventory of your health, financial resources, and unique gifts and talents. Then, if all is in order, go to your bishop and say, "We're ready." You may feel it is improper to approach your bishop or branch president about your desires to serve a mission. But it is proper for a mature sister or couple to let their priesthood leaders know that they are willing and able to serve a mission. I urge you to do so.

Bishops, there should be no hesitation on your part to initiate a Recommend for Missionary Service interview to discuss and encourage missionary couples to serve a mission.

Elder Clarence R. Bishop, director of the Mormon Handcart Visitors' Center, has served five missions. The first one he served as a young man. The last four missions, he was interviewed to serve by inspired priesthood leaders. He indicated that he might not have served any of the last four had his bishop not encouraged him to serve.

Some mature couples and single sisters have been called as missionaries to teach English as a second language to students, teachers, and government officials in Thailand. These retired teachers and educational administrators, by giving freely of their gifts and talents developed through their many years of teaching experience, have made remarkable progress in teaching English to students, training teachers, and being good ambassadors for the Church in Thailand.

Jerry and Karen Johnson served in Hong Kong, teaching English as a second language. One day after class, near the end of their mission, a little second-grade girl, to whom Sister Johnson had become very attached, came up to her and, putting out her arms as though she were an

airplane flying, asked, "*Meiguo?*" (meaning "America?"). Sister Johnson looked at her and said, "Yes, we are returning to America." She buried her head in Sister Johnson's chest and sobbed. "I held her tight and sobbed right along with her," Sister Johnson said. "Fifty other students gathered around, sobbing right along with us. Our mission has placed us in the center of a whirlwind of love that seems to envelop us."

### Go forth and serve

As Jesus sent forth the Twelve to go on their missions, He commanded them, saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Where much is given, much is expected. You have received much in your life; go forth and freely give in the service of our Lord and Savior. Have faith; the Lord knows where you are needed. The need is so great, brothers and sisters, and the laborers are so few.

"When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). I know this is His work. Go forth and serve!

That you may experience the blessings of missionary service for you and your families is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Darwin B. Christenson

### David, a future missionary

My dear brothers and sisters, a blessing of Church membership is the privilege of feeling and bearing testimony, which expression may also come from an act or an example.

As well as others, my wife and I shall never, never forget the young brother standing in the sweeping, torrential rains during the cornerstone ceremony of the Recife Brazil Temple last December.

As President Hinckley and President Faust came from the temple into his view, this little lad I'll call David—about 10 years old—braced himself, ignoring the wind and the rain, his white shirt and his trousers soaked through and through. He stood tall and resolute as a little soldier and gave determined recognition that he was, indeed, in the presence of the Lord's own prophets, seers, and revelators.

David is representative of the many wonderful young people who are the future of the Church. He has been well taught by loving parents, with reinforcement from Primary teachers, to honor, love, and follow the prophets. Given some exposure, our young brothers and young sisters come quite naturally, like David, to a deep love for Jesus and for our prophets. As parents and teachers, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to reinforce this tender love and respect.

Through this careful guidance, testimonies will grow consistently over time to become finally founded upon personally received revelation.

As poignantly demonstrated by David, our young brother in the rain, the family is the basic, everlasting organization of the Church, from which he has learned so much. With tutoring, he will gain his own personal testimony that Jesus is the Son of the Living God and that through His Atonement the Savior perfectly completed His expiatory promise. Joseph Smith is the first prophet of the Restoration. Gordon B. Hinckley is our current, living, and loving prophet.

David will grow up knowing he will serve a mission. His father will speak often of the blessings of his own mission. He is representative of the fathers in Zion who are faithful priesthood holders.

David's mother will build unity in the family by establishing important and lasting family traditions. She is representative of mothers who are eager to see children grow and who are able to wipe away tears and iron out many of the day-to-day wrinkles of mortality, as well as the wrinkles in shirts and skirts.

### **Avoiding the sharks of mortality**

Along the beautiful beaches of Recife, there are posted signs indicating that swimmers can safely enjoy the ocean if they will but confine their activities to the areas between the beaches and the reef.

Those who swim or surf beyond the reef expose themselves to attack by sharks, which are a continuing threat and have caused a significant number of injuries and deaths.

Like the signs on the shore, the Lord and His prophets provide inspired guidance for earthly sons and daughters to be able to avoid the ever-present sharks of mortality: the pornography, drugs, and sins that can diminish or kill the inherent sense of divinity the Lord would have His children enjoy. This heavenly guidance is provided by God because of His inexhaustible, personal love for each of His children. Prayer, scriptures, and fasting are available to all who would use them.

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" is a treasured resource, an inspired document provided by our prophets (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Let us learn and relearn its lessons. Then, as caring parents, we will want to struggle to whatever degree is needful for the protection and benefit of our Davids—representing our children, grandchildren, and loved ones.

Alma the Younger taught each of his sons individually. He indicates that he taught Helaman in his youth, even as we see David is learning in his youth (see Alma 36:3). David's father may well paraphrase, "O David, my son, learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God" (see Alma 37:35).

David learns he will never make even one small foray into the polluted waters of life, because he knows that the sharks of mortality can tear away the tender spiritual muscle of a growing testimony. He also knows he does not need to wear the uniform of the supposed nonconformists by body piercing and tattoos.

### **Book of Mormon lessons on parenthood**

Before David leaves home to begin his missionary service, it will be a blessing for him to be taught individually by his

own father, even as Alma so beautifully taught his son Helaman: "Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord. . . . Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings" (Alma 37:36-37).

Immediately in the Book of Mormon we learn lessons of parenthood. Father Lehi provided the foundation background, giving his son Nephi reason to make the famous statement, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).

To Laman and Lemuel, Father Lehi provided a beautiful analogy in powerful teaching: "O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness! . . . O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!" (1 Nephi 2:9-10).

Enos, reaching adulthood, and while out hunting in the forest, returned to a remembrance and gave heed to the lifelong teachings of his father, Jacob. Enos at last decided to act upon those teachings, as he cried unto God "all the day long" and still through the night. At last the voice came: "Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed" (Enos 1:4-5). Then Enos changed his life's focus and went about teaching.

The powerful and great prophet Enoch gave credit to his parentage, saying, "My father taught me in all the ways of God" (Moses 6:41).

May all our Davids be so prepared to serve.

We all love to be of service. In the blessing and need for providing service, might I express appreciation for the support of my beautiful wife, for our children and their spouses, for our grandchildren, for our brothers and our sisters, for their families, for our missionaries who are lasting examples of commitment, for friends who are a constant support, for the beautiful people of Brazil, for leaders, for our prophets, and especially for our Lord and Savior. The Church is true.

I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Elder L. Aldin Porter

### The march of man's accomplishments

We of the Seventy would like to extend a hearty welcome to the brethren who this day were sustained to the five quorums of Seventy.

We are blessed, brothers and sisters, to live in a world filled with almost

daily announcements of progress against disease and other threats to mankind. There seems to be a never-ending march of man's accomplishments in overcoming impediments to a long and healthy life. Most of us have become accustomed to a constant flow of wonders.



Yet with it all, we are also faced with a relentless onslaught of soul-destroying distractions such as pornography, illegal drug use, and abuse of spouse and children. There is a parade of false philosophies which are trumpeted as new and modern answers to the problems of the world.

The extensive communication resources the Lord has revealed for our day have, to a large degree, been appropriated for evil purposes. The print media, television and videos, and now the Internet constantly bring into our homes material that will pollute our souls and destroy our lives. Our homes in times past have generally been peaceful havens against the world. To retain that peace now takes an almost unrelenting vigilance.

### **Christ is our protector**

Yet we have great reason for optimism. We are not left without defense against these wicked elements that would bring us sorrow and despair here and would deny us the joys of eternity hereafter.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:50-51).

He is the answer to the longings of the human heart for certainty. He is the answer to our individual sins and to our sorrows.

He is our protector in a world constantly seeking to solve problems through violence. He is our protector in a world where the minds of so many are filled with evil continually. We, of all people, should look to the future with enthusi-

asm and optimism. We have His word to direct us, to comfort us, and to give us hope for the future. There is so much that lies ahead of light and purity and virtue; and in time violence will disappear, for surely the lamb will lie down with the lion.

### **Book of Mormon is for our protection**

The Lord, of course, saw our day. He saw the devastating effects of transgression. And He prophesied that He would provide protection for His people. He spoke to Enoch of the last days—the days of wickedness and vengeance—and He said:

"And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve;

"And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth" (Moses 7:61-62).

Did you note that He said, "Truth will I send forth out of the earth"? To do what? "To bear testimony of mine Only Begotten."

The Book of Mormon was compiled and translated for our day. It came forth out of the earth as was prophesied to bless and guide the lives of the people of this day. It came in a day and time as the Lord knew it would when the dislocations caused by wickedness would be very intense.

### **Fulfillment of Moroni's promise**

As Moroni concluded the immense work of his father and others, he made a

promise that has been shared widely in a multitude of languages. But I fear it has become too commonplace among us. We learn about it in Sunday School, in seminary, in family home evenings, and we even memorize it as missionaries. But today I would ask that you listen as I read this promise as if you had never heard of it.

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).

This is the promise, that our Eternal Father will give us a manifestation of truth—a personal revelation of eternal consequence.

The Book of Mormon was given to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, manifesting Himself unto all nations.

Do not treat lightly the revelations of God. Do not treat lightly this astonishing promise. I bear a solemn testimony to you that this promise has been fulfilled not only in my life but in the lives of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people.

You will find that when Moroni's promise is fulfilled and you are given the knowledge that the Book of Mormon is truly the word of God, there will come with it a witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. I have never known an instance where this did not occur. Moreover, I do not believe a violation of this principle will ever take place. A spiritual witness of the Nephi scripture will always bring the certainty of the Savior's existence.

With that witness borne of the Holy Ghost will come a sure knowledge that Joseph Smith told the truth when he said that he had seen the Father and the Son on that spring morning of 1820.

A knowledge that Jesus Christ lives and is our Redeemer and Savior is worth whatever the cost may be. This is the fulfillment of Moroni's promise in our lives.

After that, through study and prayer we can come to know that He has given us life through the Resurrection. We will come to know that He has promised us a quality of life hereafter beyond our capacity to comprehend. We must understand that this testimony comes only through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

### **Be persistent and sincere**

Read the Book of Mormon. With a "sincere heart [and] real intent," begin to read. Ponder the words. Often pause and ask your Heavenly Father "if these things are not true." Continue to read, to ponder, and to ask. It will not be easy reading. There will be roadblocks along the way. Persist.

Approach your Father in Heaven, having expelled your prejudices and biases. Leave your heart open to receive the impressions that come from eternal sources. Many inspiring treasures will be revealed to you. There will, in time, come into your heart and mind an assurance that Jesus Christ is the living Son of the living Father. With it will come a knowledge that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration and that there are apostles and prophets on the earth today. You will come to know with a sure knowledge that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet to the world as well as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### **Our love for Christ will increase**

Now I make this promise to those who are investigating the Church, to those who are members but who have lost enthusiasm for the work and are therefore in a state of confusion in a world that is in moral chaos. I make this promise to those

who through transgression and faithless living are in despair over eternal things.

When this sacred witness comes, our love for Him will increase without bounds; our desire to know of Him will increase. We will sorrow as we read such words as King Benjamin's prophecy of Him:

"And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

"And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:7-8).

### **Our gratitude for Christ will overflow**

Our hearts will overflow with gratitude for His sacrifice in our behalf. This doctrine of personal revelation is not new. This eternal principle has been taught in ages past:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto

thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-17).

### **"All things bear record of me"**

After this sacred witness comes, you will see His hand in a thousand things.

"And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me" (Moses 6:63).

We will find great joy in contemplating His life, and we will shortly realize that in truth all things do bear witness of Him. Furthermore, in the midst of our trials and challenges, we will find peace, knowing that in the end it will be all right. We will find serenity in the face of affliction. We will find this serenity in life even as chaos swirls around us.

Such is the power of a testimony and witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, the very Savior of the world.

I bear witness of Him. I witness that He lived, He died, He came forth from the tomb a resurrected being, and He has gifted us with resurrection and a promise of an eternal life of joy and fulfillment through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed anew in our day through living prophets.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Russell M. Nelson**

### **Personal preparation for temple blessings**

Under President Gordon B. Hinckley's inspired direction, temples are now

more accessible than ever. Inscribed on each temple are the words "Holiness to the Lord."<sup>1</sup> That statement designates both the temple and its purposes as holy.

Those who enter the temple are also to bear the attribute of holiness.<sup>2</sup> It may be easier to ascribe holiness to a building than it is to a people. We can acquire holiness only by enduring and persistent personal effort. Through the ages, servants of the Lord have warned against unholiness. Jacob, brother of Nephi, wrote, "I would speak unto you of holiness; but as ye are not holy, and ye look upon me as a teacher, [I] must . . . teach you the consequences of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Now I feel that same sense of responsibility to teach. As temples are prepared for our members, our members need to prepare for the temple.

### The temple

The temple is the house of the Lord. The basis for every temple ordinance and covenant—the heart of the plan of salvation—is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Every activity, every lesson, all we do in the Church points to the Lord and His holy house. Our efforts to proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead all lead to the temple. Each holy temple stands as a symbol of our membership in the Church,<sup>4</sup> as a sign of our faith in life after death, and as a sacred step toward eternal glory for us and our families.

President Hinckley said that "these unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology."<sup>5</sup>

To enter the temple is a tremendous blessing. But first we must be worthy. We should not be rushed. We cannot cut corners of preparation and risk the breaking of covenants we were not prepared to make. That would be worse than not making them at all.

### The endowment

In the temple we receive an endowment, which is, literally speaking, a gift.

In receiving this gift, we should understand its significance and the importance of keeping sacred covenants. Each temple ordinance "is not just a ritual to go through, it is an act of solemn promising."<sup>6</sup>

The temple endowment was given by revelation. Thus, it is best understood by revelation, prayerfully sought with a sincere heart.<sup>7</sup> President Brigham Young said, "Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father . . . and gain your eternal exaltation."<sup>8</sup>

### Sealing authority

In preparing to receive the endowment and other ordinances of the temple, we should understand the sealing authority of the priesthood. Jesus referred to this authority long ago when He taught His Apostles, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."<sup>9</sup> That same authority has been restored in these latter days. Just as priesthood is eternal—without beginning or end—so is the effect of priesthood ordinances that bind families together forever.

Temple ordinances, covenants, endowments, and sealings enable individuals to be reconciled with the Lord and families to be sealed beyond the veil of death. Obedience to temple covenants qualifies us for eternal life, the greatest gift of God to man.<sup>10</sup> Eternal life is more than immortality. Eternal life is exaltation in the highest heaven—the kind of life that God lives.

### Temple recommend

Preparation also includes qualification for a temple recommend. Our Redeemer requires that His temples be protected from desecration. No unclean thing may enter His hallowed house.<sup>11</sup> Yet anyone is welcome who prepares well.

Each person applying for a recommend will be interviewed by a judge in Israel—the bishop—and by a stake president.<sup>12</sup> They hold keys of priesthood authority and the responsibility to help us know when our preparation and timing are appropriate to enter the temple. Their interviews will assess several vital issues. They will ask if we obey the law of tithing, if we keep the Word of Wisdom, and if we sustain the authorities of the Church. They will ask if we are honest, if we are morally clean, and if we honor the power of procreation as a sacred trust from our Creator.

Why are these issues so crucial? Because they are spiritual separators. They help determine if we truly live as children of the covenant,<sup>13</sup> able to resist temptation from servants of sin.<sup>14</sup> These interviews help to discern if we are willing to live in accord with the will of the true and living God or if our hearts are still set “upon riches and . . . vain things of the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Such requirements are not difficult to understand. Because the temple is the house of the Lord, standards for admission are set by Him. One enters as His guest. To hold a temple recommend is a priceless privilege and a tangible sign of obedience to God and His prophets.<sup>16</sup>

### Physical preparation for the temple

One prepares physically for the temple by dressing properly. It is not a place for casual attire. “We should dress in such a way that we might comfortably attend a sacrament meeting or a gathering that is proper and dignified.”<sup>17</sup>

Within the temple, all are dressed in spotless white to remind us that God is to have a pure people.<sup>18</sup> Nationality, language, and position in the Church are of secondary significance. In that democracy of dress, all sit side by side and are considered equal in the eyes of our Maker.<sup>19</sup>

Brides and grooms enter the temple to be married for time and all eternity.

There brides wear white dresses—long sleeved, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. Grooms also dress in white. And brethren who come to witness weddings do not wear tuxedos.

Wearing the temple garment has deep symbolic significance. It represents a continuing commitment.<sup>20</sup> Just as the Savior exemplified the need to endure to the end, we wear the garment faithfully as part of the enduring armor of God.<sup>21</sup> Thus we demonstrate our faith in Him and in His eternal covenants with us.<sup>22</sup>

### Spiritual preparation for the temple

In addition to physical preparation, we prepare spiritually. Because the ordinances and covenants of the temple are sacred, we are under solemn obligation not to speak outside the temple of that which occurs in the temple. There are, however, some principles we can discuss.

Each temple is a house of learning.<sup>23</sup> There we are taught in the Master’s way.<sup>24</sup> His way differs from modes of others. His way is ancient and rich with symbolism. We can learn much by pondering the reality for which each symbol stands.<sup>25</sup> The teachings of the temple are beautifully simple and simply beautiful. They are understood by the humble, yet they can excite the intellect of the brightest minds.

Spiritual preparation is enhanced by study. I like to recommend that members going to the temple for the first time read short explanatory paragraphs in the Bible Dictionary, listed under seven topics:<sup>26</sup> “Anoint,”<sup>27</sup> “Atonement,”<sup>28</sup> “Christ,”<sup>29</sup> “Covenant,”<sup>30</sup> “Fall of Adam,”<sup>31</sup> “Sacrifices,”<sup>32</sup> and “Temple.”<sup>33</sup> Doing so will provide a firm foundation.

One may also read in the Old Testament<sup>34</sup> and the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Such a review of ancient scripture is even more enlightening *after* one is familiar with the temple endowment. Those books underscore the antiquity of temple work.<sup>35</sup>

With each ordinance is a covenant—a promise. A covenant made with God is not restrictive, but protective. Such a concept is not new. For example, if our water supply is not clean, we filter the water to screen out harmful ingredients. Divine covenants help us to filter out of our minds impurities that could harm us. When we choose to deny ourselves of all ungodliness,<sup>36</sup> we lose nothing of value and gain the glory of eternal life. Covenants do not hold us down; they elevate us beyond the limits of our own power and perspective.

### Eternal perspective

President Hinckley has explained that lofty perspective:

"There is a goal beyond the Resurrection," he said. "That is exaltation in our Father's kingdom. . . . It will begin with acceptance of him as our Eternal Father and of his Son as our living Redeemer. It will involve participation in various ordinances, each one important and necessary. The first of these is baptism by immersion in water, without which, according to the Savior, a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God. There must follow the birth of the Spirit, the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then in succession through the years will come, for men, ordination to the priesthood, followed by the blessings of the temple for both men and women who are worthy to enter therein. These temple blessings include our washings and anointings that we may be clean before the Lord. They include the . . . endowment of obligations and blessings that motivate us to behavior compatible with the principles of the gospel. They include the sealing ordinances by which that which is bound on earth is bound in heaven, providing for the continuity of the family."<sup>37</sup>

I have learned that temple blessings are most meaningful when death takes a loved one away from the family circle. To know that the pain of separation is only temporary provides peace that passes

ordinary understanding.<sup>38</sup> Death cannot sever families sealed in the temple. They understand death as a necessary part of God's great plan of happiness.<sup>39</sup>

Such perspective helps us maintain fidelity to covenants we have made. President Boyd K. Packer emphasized that "ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into [God's] presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality."<sup>40</sup>

Ordinances of the temple relate to *personal* progress and to the redemption of departed *ancestors* as well. "For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, . . . they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect."<sup>41</sup> Service in their behalf provides repeated opportunities for temple worship. And that service deserves commitment to a planned schedule. By doing for others what they cannot do for themselves, we emulate the pattern of the Savior, who wrought the Atonement to bless the lives of other people.

One day we will meet our Maker and stand before Him at Judgment.<sup>42</sup> We will be judged according to our ordinances, covenants, deeds, and the desires of our hearts.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, in this world smitten with spiritual decay, can individuals prepared for temple blessings make a difference? Yes! Those Saints are "the covenant people of the Lord, . . . armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory."<sup>44</sup> Their example can lift the lives of all humankind. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Exodus 28:36; 39:30; Psalm 93:5. Translated equivalents are used on temples in non-English-speaking localities.
2. See Exodus 19:5–6; Leviticus 19:1–2; Psalm 24:3–5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 20:69; 110:6–9; see also Bible Dictionary, "Holiness," 703–4.

3. 2 Nephi 9:48.
4. See "Following the Master: Teachings of President Howard W. Hunter," *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 21–22; Howard W. Hunter, "The Great Symbol of Our Membership," *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 3.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 638.
7. See Moroni 10:4–5.
8. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 416.
9. Matthew 16:19.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:20; see also Isaiah 52:11; Alma 11:37; 3 Nephi 27:19.
12. Or the branch president and mission president.
13. See 3 Nephi 20:26; see also Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 41–42; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 32.
14. See Romans 6:17, 20; Doctrine and Covenants 121:17.
15. Alma 7:6.
16. President Hinckley said, "I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53).
17. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (1980), 73.
18. See Neal A. Maxwell, "Not My Will, But Thine" (1988), 135; see also Doctrine and Covenants 100:16.
19. This reminds us that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34; see also Moroni 8:12).
20. The Lord assured that even though "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; . . . my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my people be removed" (Joseph Smith Translation, Isaiah 54:10). Surely we would not ever want knowingly to discard from us an emblem of His everlasting covenant.
21. See Ephesians 6:11–13; see also Alma 46:13, 21; Doctrine and Covenants 27:15.
22. In a letter dated October 10, 1988, the First Presidency wrote:  
 "Practices frequently observed among the members of the Church suggest that some members do not fully understand the covenant they make in the temple to wear the garment in accordance with the spirit of the holy endowment.  
 "Church members who have been clothed with the garment in the temple have made a covenant to wear it throughout their lives. This has been interpreted to mean that it is worn as underclothing both day and night. . . . The promise of protection and blessings is conditioned upon worthiness and faithfulness in keeping the covenant.  
 "The fundamental principle ought to be to wear the garment and not to find occasions to remove it. Thus, members should not remove either all or part of the garment to work in the yard or to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. Nor should they remove it to participate in recreational activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath regular clothing. When the garment must be removed, such as for swimming, it should be restored as soon as possible.  
 "The principles of modesty and keeping the body appropriately covered are implicit in the covenant and should govern the nature of all clothing worn. Endowed members of the Church wear the garment as a reminder of the sacred covenants they have made with the Lord and also as a protection against temptation and evil. How it is worn is an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior."
23. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119; 109:8.
24. In fact, He *is* the way (see John 14:6).
25. See John A. Widtsoe, "Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 62.

26. Members of the Church who do not read English may find comparable terms in their language editions of the Guide to the Scriptures.
27. Page 609, paragraphs 1, 4.
28. Page 617, paragraphs 1–2.
29. Page 633, paragraphs 1–3.
30. Page 651, paragraphs 1–2.
31. Page 670, paragraphs 1–2.
32. Pages 765–66, paragraph 1.
33. Pages 780–81, paragraphs 1–3.
34. Chapters of special interest include Exodus 26–29, 39; Leviticus 8; 2 Samuel 12 (v. 20); 2 Chronicles 6–7; Isaiah 22; Ezekiel 16.
35. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41.
36. See Moroni 10:32; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26.
37. “Temples and Temple Work,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1982, 3.
38. See Philippians 4:7.
39. See Alma 42:8.
40. In Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 24.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
42. See 2 Nephi 9:41.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
44. 1 Nephi 14:14.

### President Faust

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to

us, followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, please be courteous, use caution, and obey the traffic rules.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Ricks College for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing “Come, Follow Me,” after which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Come, Follow Me.”

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### An undervalued sweet roll

We all have life events that, when we recall them years later, acquire new and important meaning. When I was in junior high, I was honored by the school administration when I was asked to become a member of the student hall patrol. On the days we were assigned to be on hall patrol, we were instructed to bring our lunch to school and eat it together. It was always a special treat, and there was al-

ways a lot of competition to see whose mother had prepared the most desirable lunch. Often we traded lunch items among ourselves.

One day when I was assigned to be on hall patrol, I forgot to tell Mother that I needed a lunch until I was almost ready to leave for school. An expression of concern came over Mother's face when I requested a lunch. She told me that she had just used up her last loaf of bread for



breakfast and would not be baking until that afternoon. All she had in the house to make a lunch was a large sweet roll left over from the previous night's supper. Mother made delicious sweet rolls. She always arranged them in a pan so there was one large one across the top of the pan and then rows of smaller ones down the length of the pan. Only the large one remained. It was about the size of a loaf of bread in length but, of course, not in thickness. I was embarrassed to take just a sweet roll for lunch when I imagined what the other patrol members would have, but I decided it was better to go with the sweet roll than go without lunch.

When it came time to eat lunch, I went to a far-off corner so I wouldn't be noticed. When the trading of lunches started, my friends wanted to know what I had. I explained what had happened that morning, and to my dismay everyone wanted to see the sweet roll. But my friends surprised me. Instead of making fun of me, they all wanted to have a piece of the sweet roll! It turned out to be my best lunch trading day of the entire year! The sweet roll that I thought would be an embarrassment to me turned out to be the hit of our lunch hour.

### **Appreciating our Church membership**

As I have reflected on this experience, it has occurred to me that it is often part of human nature to attach less value to familiar things simply because they are so common to us. One of these familiar things could be our membership in the restored Church.

What members of the Church possess is a "pearl of great price," yet sometimes this priceless gem is so familiar to us that we do not appreciate its true value. While it is true we should not cast our pearls before swine, this does not mean we should not share them with people who will appreciate their value. One of the greatest side benefits of missionary work is watch-

ing the great value that others who have not previously heard about our beliefs attach to them. There is a great benefit in seeing one's treasures through someone else's eyes. My concern is that we often take for granted the unique and valuable blessings that we have of membership in the Lord's Church, and in such a state of underappreciation we are more likely to be complacent about our Church membership and are less valiant contributors to building a community of Saints.

We are blessed with a great and noble heritage that offers a pathway to truth that veers dramatically from the so-called ways of the world. We need to remind ourselves about the value of our heritage so we do not underestimate its worth. I challenge the many Saints who are hiding in the corners to stand tall and proclaim loudly the treasured teachings of our common heritage, not with a spirit of pride or boasting but with a spirit of confidence and conviction.

### **Joseph's vision of a community of Saints**

Something about which I am most proud is how our forefathers, through their faith in God and their industry and perseverance, turned places that nobody wanted into beautiful cities.

When Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Liberty Jail with no prospect of release, an extermination order had been issued against the Saints. This made it necessary for Brigham Young to organize the Saints to move them from Missouri. The migration from Missouri in February of 1839 caused many to complain that the Lord had forsaken His people. Some of the Church members questioned the wisdom of once again gathering the Saints together in one location.

Crossing the Mississippi River and pausing in some of the smaller communities along its banks proved to be a respite necessary for the members to receive new direction from their leaders. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail, en-

couraging the Saints not to scatter but to gather together, then build from centers of strength.

In April of that year, Joseph and Hyrum and their fellow prisoners were allowed to escape from the jail in Missouri. They arrived in Quincy, Illinois, on the 22nd day of April of 1839. The Prophet immediately went to work to find a place to gather the Saints. He found a spot on the banks of the Mississippi River that looked like it had promise. He named the city Nauvoo, meaning "beautiful," but at that time it was anything but beautiful. It was a swampy peninsula that had not been drained. Out of the swamp-infested land rose a city that could truly be called beautiful.

The first homes in Nauvoo were huts, tents, and a few abandoned buildings. Then the Saints started to build log cabins. As time and capital would allow, framed buildings were erected, and, still later, more substantial brick buildings were built.

The Prophet had a design to build a community of Saints. He had three major objectives: first, economic; second, educational; and third, spiritual.

### **Love and work in the community of Saints**

The Prophet Joseph Smith's desire was that the Saints should become economically self-sufficient. Our Father in Heaven has given all of His children everything they have—their talents, their abilities, their material goods—and has made them stewards over these blessings.

A treasured remnant of our heritage of economic self-sufficiency is the Church Welfare Services program. It has two key ingredients. The first is the principle of love, and the second is that of work.

The principle of love is the motivating power that moves us to give our time, money, and services to this wonderful program. John the Beloved wrote:

"Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. . . .

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:7–9, 11).

Then in 1 John, the third chapter, he wrote: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

It is our understanding of the principle of love that encourages us to give generously to the fast offerings, a wonderful, revealed system in which on the first Sunday of each month we voluntarily refrain from eating two meals and contribute the cost of those meals to our bishop. He then has the resources to help him help those in need. The system is mostly painless, and it raises our appreciation for those who are without and provides a means to satisfy their daily requirements.

May the Lord continue to bless us with the desire to love one another and give generously based on the principle of the fast.

The second basic principle is that of work. Work is just as important to the success of the Lord's economic plan as the commandment to love our neighbor.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read:

"I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

"These things ought not to be, and must be done away from among them" (D&C 68:31-32).

I have a special concern about the Lord's reference to our children. We see evidence of many parents who overindulge their children without adding sufficient training about the value of work.

In any community of Saints we all work to serve each other in the best way we know how. Our work has a higher purpose because it is work to bless others and to build the kingdom of God.

### Education in the community of Saints

The second requirement in the Prophet Joseph's community of Saints was that of education. As early as 1840, when he applied for the incorporation of Nauvoo, he also asked for authority to establish a university.

From the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read, "Educational ideas and practices of the Church grew directly out of certain revelations received by Joseph Smith that emphasize the eternal nature of knowledge and the vital role learning plays in the spiritual, moral, and intellectual development of mankind" ("Education," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. [1992], 2:441).

There are verses in our modern scripture that make special mention of the importance of secular and spiritual learning. A few of these are, first from the Book of Mormon, "But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:29).

And from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

"And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D&C 130:18-19).

From the Articles of Faith, "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

### A community of spiritual Saints

The final desire of the Prophet Joseph Smith was to build a community of spiritual Saints. This begins in the home. The most important instruction our children will ever receive will be that which parents give to them in their own home, if parents diligently teach their children the way our Father in Heaven would like them to follow. One instruction our leaders have given us is to hold regular family home evenings where we can meet together weekly, learn gospel principles, and build family unity. Here we can counsel together, read the scriptures, pray together, and play together. Our greatest goal is to become an eternal family. We build a community of Saints one family at a time.

To enable the eternal family, a magnificent temple was constructed in Nauvoo. It stood as a beacon to remind all the people that the most important blessings in life are spiritual blessings. In the temple, sacred covenants are made and the saving ordinances of the gospel are administered. Repeated visits to the temple give us an opportunity of renewing these covenants and performing ordinances vicariously for those who have died without these blessings.

We now have temples scattered throughout the earth, giving many more the chance to receive the necessary ordinances to qualify for life eternal. Those who are worthy to enter the temple will receive great spiritual blessings if they continue to serve in faithfulness and keep their covenants. The Lord blesses His people when they keep His commandments and frequently visit His house. In God's eternal plan, our temples are gathering places for communities of Saints working to build Zion.

### A community that is one with God

Our community of Saints is not one of exclusion but one of inclusion, built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (see Ephesians 2:20). It is open to all of us who love, appreciate, and have compassion for our Father in Heaven's children. The dual foundations of our economic welfare are the principles of charity and hard work. It is a progressive community in which we educate our youth in courtesy and civility and also in the deeper truths of the restored gospel. Our community has a spiritual center, allowing us to live with the companionship of the Holy Spirit, which guides and directs us in our lives.

May God grant unto us the desire to live closer to Him so we may enjoy the

blessings of peace, harmony, security, and love for all mankind—the hallmarks of a community that is one with Him. He is our God. We are His children. This is my witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTE

Historical information is from *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 2nd ed. (Church Educational System manual, 2000), 193–223.

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The choir sang “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.”

Elder David R. Stone offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 171st Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, March 31, 2001, at 6:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake City. Paul Broomhead directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to the general priesthood session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the

priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake, under the direction of Paul Broomhead, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Come, O Thou King of Kings.” The invocation will then be offered by Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church. The choir will then sing “I Need Thee Every Hour.” Following the singing, Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder David E. Sorenson of the Presidency of the Seventy and Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Bishop H. David Burton offered the invocation.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### **Our sacred trust to watch over the Church**

I am grateful for the honor of speaking in the name of the Lord to the shepherds of Israel. That is who we are. When we accepted the priesthood, we took upon us the responsibility to do our part in watching over the Church. None of us can escape accountability. The president of the priesthood in all the earth bears the total responsibility. Through the keys of the priesthood, each quorum bears its part. Even the newest deacon in the most distant place on earth has a part in the great responsibility to watch over the Church.

Listen to these words from the Doctrine and Covenants: "Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; and let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?" And then the Savior includes even the deacons in His listing of assignments: "The deacons and teachers should be appointed to watch over the church, to be standing ministers unto the church" (D&C 84:109, 111).

### **Protecting the sheep**

I pray that I might explain our sacred trust so that even the newest deacon and the convert most recently ordained will see his opportunity. In many places in the scriptures, the Lord has described Himself and those He calls to the priesthood as shepherds. A shepherd watches over sheep. In the scriptural stories the sheep are in danger; they need protection and

nourishment. The Savior warns us that we must watch the sheep as He does. He gave His life for them. They are His. We cannot approach His standard if, like a hired servant, we watch only when it is convenient and only for a reward. Here is His standard:

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep" (John 10:11-12).

### **Feeding the sheep**

The members of the Church are the sheep. They are His, and we are called by Him to watch over them. We are to do more than warn them against danger. We are to feed them. Once, long ago, the Lord commanded His prophet to rebuke the shepherds of Israel. Here is the warning, which is still in force, in the words of the prophet Ezekiel:

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, . . . and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" (Ezekiel 34:1-2).

The food those shepherds took for themselves, letting the sheep starve, could lead to salvation for the sheep. One of the great shepherds in the Book of Mormon

described both what that food is and how it can be provided:

"And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith" (Moroni 6:4).

### **Deacons rescue a lost sheep**

It is painful to imagine a shepherd feeding himself and letting the sheep go hungry. Yet I have seen many shepherds who feed their flocks. One was the president of a deacons quorum. One of his quorum members lived near my home. That neighbor boy had never attended a quorum meeting or done anything with the members of his quorum. His stepfather was not a member, and his mother did not attend church.

The presidency of his deacons quorum met in council one Sunday morning. Each week they were fed the good word of God by the fine adviser and teacher. In their presidency meeting, those 13-year-old shepherds remembered the boy who never came. They talked about how much he needed what they received. The president assigned his counselor to go after that wandering sheep.

I knew the counselor, and I knew he was shy, and I knew the difficulty of the assignment, so I watched with wonder through my front window as the counselor trudged by my house, going up the road to the home of the boy who never came to church. The shepherd had his hands in his pockets. His eyes were on the ground. He walked slowly, the way you would if you weren't sure you wanted to get where you were headed. In 20 minutes or so, he came back down the road with the lost

deacon walking by his side. That scene was repeated for a few more Sundays. Then the boy who had been lost and was found moved away.

Now, that story seems unremarkable. It was just three boys sitting in a room around a small table. Then it was a boy walking up a road and coming back with another boy. But years later I was in a stake conference, a continent away from the room in which that presidency had met in council. A gray-haired man came up to me and said quietly, "My grandson lived in your ward years ago." With tenderness he told me of that boy's life. And then he asked if I could find that deacon who walked slowly up that road. And he wondered if I could thank him and tell him that his grandson, now grown to be a man, still remembered.

He remembered because in those few weeks he had been, for the first time in his life that he recognized, watched over by the shepherds of Israel. He had been warned by hearing eternal truth from people who cared about him. He had been offered the bread of life. And young shepherds had been true to their trust from the Lord.

### **The Savior watches with us**

It is not easy to learn to do that well and do it consistently. The Savior showed us how—and how to train others to do it. He established His Church. He had to leave His Church in the hands of inexperienced servants, just as many of us are. He knew they would face difficulties beyond their human powers to resolve. What He did for them can be a guide for us.

When the Savior went to the Garden of Gethsemane to suffer bitter agonies before His betrayal and sufferings on the cross, He could have gone alone. But He took His priesthood servants with Him. Here is the account from Matthew:

"Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:

tarry ye here, and *watch with me*" (Matthew 26:38; italics added).

The Savior prayed to His Father for strength. In the midst of His agony, He returned to Peter to teach him what it requires for all who would watch with Him:

"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-41).

There is a reassurance and a warning in that simple exchange of the Master with His shepherds. He watches with us. He who sees all things, whose love is endless, and who never sleeps—He watches with us. He knows what the sheep need at every moment. By the power of the Holy Ghost, He can tell us and send us to them. And we can by the priesthood invite His power to bless them.

#### **A warning to watch over ourselves**

The Savior's warning to Peter is to us as well. The wolf who would kill the sheep will surely tear at the shepherd. So we must watch over ourselves as well as others. As shepherds we will be tempted to go near the edges of sin. But sin in any form offends the Holy Ghost. You must not do anything or go anywhere that offends the Spirit. You cannot afford that risk. Should sin cause you to fail, you would not only be responsible for your own sins but for the sorrow you might have prevented in the lives of others had you been worthy to hear and obey the whisperings of the Spirit. The shepherd must be able to hear the voice of the Spirit and bring down the powers of heaven, or he will fail.

The warning given to an ancient prophet is a warning to us as well:

"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 33:7-8).

#### **Shepherds must be motivated by love**

The penalty for failure is great. But the Lord taught Peter how to build the foundation for success. He repeated a simple message three times. It was that love for the Lord would be in the heart of a true shepherd. Here is the end of the account:

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

It is love that must motivate the shepherds of Israel. That may seem difficult at the start, because we may not even know the Lord well. But if we begin with even a little grain of faith in Him, our service to the sheep will increase our love for Him and for them. It comes from simple things that every shepherd must do. We pray for the sheep, every one for whom we are responsible. When we ask, "Please tell me who needs me," answers will come. A face or a name will come into our minds. Or we may have a chance meeting that we feel isn't chance. In those moments we will feel the love of the Savior for them and for us. As you watch over His sheep, your love for Him will grow. And that will increase your confidence and your courage.

#### **Quorum leader becomes a true shepherd**

Now, you may be thinking, "It's not that easy for me. I have so many people to watch over. And I have so little time." But where the Lord calls, He prepares a

way—His way. There are shepherds who believe that. I'll tell you about one.

Two years ago a man was called as the president of his elders quorum. He had been a member of the Church for less than 10 years. He had just become worthy to be sealed to his wife and family in the temple. His wife was an invalid. He had three daughters. The oldest was 13, and she cooked the meals and, with the others, cared for the house. His scant earnings from manual labor supported not only those five people but a grandfather who lived with them in their small house.

When he was called to be president of his elders quorum, it had 13 members. That tiny quorum was responsible for another 101 men who either had no priesthood at all or who were deacons, teachers, or priests. He was responsible to watch over the souls of 114 families, with little hope that he could devote more than his Sundays and perhaps one night a week to his service, with all he did to serve his own family.

The difficulty of what he faced drove him to his knees in prayer. Then he stood up and went to work. In his efforts to meet and know his sheep, his prayers were answered in a way he had not expected. He came to see beyond individuals. He came to know that the Lord's purpose was for him to build families. And even with his limited experience, he knew that the way to build families would be to help them qualify to make and keep temple covenants.

He began to do what a good shepherd always does, but he did it differently when he saw the temple as their destination. First, he prayed to know who were to be his counselors to go with him. And then he prayed to know which families needed him and had been prepared.

He called on as many as he could. Some were cold and did not accept his

friendship. But with those who did, he followed a pattern. As soon as he saw interest and trust, he invited them to meet the bishop. He had asked the bishop beforehand, "Please tell them what it takes to be worthy to go to the temple to claim its blessings for them and their families. And then please testify to them, as I have, that it will be worth it."

A few then accepted the quorum president's invitation to a temple preparation class taught by stake leaders. Not all completed the course, and not all qualified for the temple. But each family and each father was prayed for. Most were invited at least once to a feast of the good word of God. With every invitation came the president's testimony of the blessings of being a family sealed forever and the sadness of being separated. Every invitation was issued with the love of the Savior.

During the president's service, he has seen 12 of the men he taught ordained elders. He has seen four of his elders ordained high priests. Those numbers don't come close to measuring the miracle. The families of those men will be blessed over generations. Fathers and mothers are now sealed to each other and to their children. They are praying over their children, receiving the help of heaven, and teaching the gospel with the love and inspiration the Lord gives to faithful parents.

That president and his counselors have become true shepherds. They have watched over the flock with the Master and have come to love Him. They are eye-witnesses to the truth of what the Savior taught an Apostle, Thomas B. Marsh. It is true for all who watch with the Lord over His sheep:

"Go your way whithersoever I will, and it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and whither you shall go.

"Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.



"Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father. Amen" (D&C 31:11-13).

I testify that God the Father lives and answers our prayers. I am a witness that the loving Savior watches over His sheep with His faithful shepherds.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder David E. Sorensen

### **You can't pet a rattlesnake**

Some years ago, Sister Sorensen and I had the privilege of visiting India. At one airport I remember walking across the landing strip and seeing some men sitting in front of wicker baskets, playing flutes. As they started to play the music, they would take the top off the basket and a cobra would appear! As the music continued, the snake would rise higher and higher, nearly reaching its full length until the cobra would collapse back into the basket. Once I noticed a cobra fall outside the basket. The man playing the flute reached over, petted the cobra, and carefully put it back into the basket. I was amazed that a man could handle such a dangerous creature, apparently without being harmed. But our guide quickly told me that this was very risky and told us that a major cause of death in this province was indeed poisonous snakebite.

My mind raced back to the days of my youth on the farm. In the summertime one of our responsibilities was to haul hay from the fields into the barn for winter storage. My dad would pitch the hay onto a flatbed wagon. I would then tromp down the hay to get as much as possible on the wagon. One day, in one of the loose bundles pitched onto the wagon was a rattlesnake! When I looked at it, I was concerned, excited, and afraid. The snake was lying in the nice, cool hay. The sun was glistening on its diamond back. After a few moments the snake stopped rattling, became still, and I became very curious. I started to get closer and leaned over for a better look, when suddenly I

heard a call from my father: "David, my boy, you can't pet a rattlesnake!"

### **Dangers of the media's poisonous snakes**

Tonight I would like to talk to you about the dangers of petting poisonous snakes. The ones I refer to do not have long, slithering bodies but come in many other forms. Often the world makes these dangers look harmless—even exciting and interesting. But petting such snakes fills the mind with poison—poison that drives away the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Brethren, today's popular entertainment often makes what is evil and wrong look enjoyable and right. Let us remember the Lord's counsel: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."<sup>2</sup>

Pornography, though billed by Satan as entertainment, is a deeply poisonous, deceptive snake that lies coiled up in magazines, the Internet, and the television. Pornography destroys self-esteem and weakens self-discipline. It is far more deadly to the spirit than the rattlesnake my father warned me not to pet. The Bible records that King David was gifted spiritually, but he stood where he should not have stood. He watched what he should not have watched. Those obsessions became his downfall.<sup>3</sup>

### **Build fortifications against temptation**

Resisting the temptations of today's electronic media is not easy. It takes focused courage and effort. In the small town where I grew up, one had to drive at least an hour to find trouble. But to-

day on the Internet, trouble is just a few mouse clicks away. To avoid such temptations, be like Captain Moroni of old; set up “fortifications” to strengthen your places of weakness. Instead of building walls of “timbers and dirt” to protect a vulnerable city, build “fortifications” in the form of personal ground rules to protect your priceless virtue.<sup>4</sup> When you’re on a date, plan to be in groups and avoid being alone. I know men, young and old, who have simply determined not to turn on the TV or surf the Internet anytime when they are alone. Fathers, it is wise to keep computers and televisions in the family room or other high-traffic areas in your home—not in children’s bedrooms. I also know of fathers who, while on business trips, wisely choose not to turn on the hotel television.

Remember, such “fortifications” are not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, they show strength. The scriptures tell us Captain Moroni was so strong that if all men would be like him, “the very powers of hell would [be] shaken forever.”<sup>5</sup> Remember, Moroni’s “strongholds”<sup>6</sup> were the key to his success. Creating your own “strongholds” will be the key to yours.

### **Decide now where to draw the line**

One key fortification you can build is to decide now, before you face a challenge, where to draw the line. Our prophet teaches that if we decide now not to watch inappropriate media but instead to walk away, “the challenge is behind us.”<sup>7</sup>

Recently my granddaughter Jennifer was invited to go with some of her school friends to a dinner and a movie. The girls all agreed on the movie they were going to see, and Jennifer was comfortable attending. However, the girl who left dinner to buy the movie tickets for the group returned with tickets to a different movie than was planned! She said, “It is a great show, and it’s R-rated.”

Jennifer, caught by surprise, couldn’t believe the situation had changed so quickly. But fortunately she had made up her mind before she ever found herself in this position that she would not watch R-rated movies. She was able to stand firm and say to her friends, “I can’t go see an R-rated movie. My parents would not approve.” To which the girls replied, “Oh, come on! Your parents will never know!” Confronted with this, Jennifer went on to say, “Well, actually it doesn’t matter whether my parents will know. I just don’t go to R-rated movies!”

Her friends were upset and tried to get her to relent. They told her she was ruining everything. When she would not give in, they threw the ticket and change in her face and deserted her for the R-rated movie. It wound up being a lonely night full of rejection from her friends. But it was a great moment for Jennifer and our family.<sup>8</sup> She gained confidence, self-worth, and spiritual power.<sup>9</sup>

### **Do not sin now and plan to repent later**

Knowingly petting a poisonous spiritual snake is doubly dangerous.<sup>10</sup> Those who do remind me of the little boy who was overheard praying, “Heavenly Father, if you can’t make me a better boy, don’t worry about it. I’m having a real good time like I am.”

Don’t be like that shortsighted boy. Those who plan to sin, thinking they can repent before they receive the sacred covenants and ordinances of the temple, risk losing their spiritual health. They find it is a painful process to come back to the right path.

### **Repentance—a spiritual snakebite kit**

For those who suffer from a poisonous snakebite, there is a painful cleansing process. Where the bite was inflicted, a cut with a sharp knife is required. Then

someone must cleanse the infected blood from the wound. Often a stay in the hospital is required. My plea to you tonight, brethren, is to avoid petting that rattle-snake. It is much better not to commit the sin.<sup>11</sup>

Some young men, as they advance in the priesthood, plan for a mission, or prepare to go to the temple, realize they suffer from a snakebite that has spiritually poisoned them. Sexual sins are among the most poisonous.

If you or someone you know has been poisoned spiritually, there is a spiritual snakebite kit. It's called repentance.<sup>12</sup> And like the remedy for temporal snakebite, it is most effective if applied quickly and early. It can combat even the most venomous spiritual poisons. "For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him."<sup>13</sup> The miracle of forgiveness is real.<sup>14</sup> Your repentance is honored of the Lord.<sup>15</sup>

An important step in obtaining the cure for spiritual poison is to get on your knees and ask Heavenly Father to forgive you.<sup>16</sup> Pray for the desire to do what is right. Pray for the courage to talk to your parents and the bishop if necessary.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of your fears, they will continue to love you. You don't have to do this alone. The path of repentance, though difficult, need not be traveled alone. Parents and leaders can provide valuable encouragement and support.

The power and freedom of forgiveness is real. The Savior taught, "The truth shall make you free."<sup>18</sup> Joy comes from living the way the Savior lived.<sup>19</sup> He has asked us to keep our thoughts pure.<sup>20</sup> He has asked us to maintain our self-respect. He has asked us to become a good influence on our family and our friends. We are to love them and to lift them toward the light. He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have

love one to another."<sup>21</sup> He has promised He will help us live His standards. He has said: "Take my yoke upon you. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>22</sup>

### Pattern our lives after the Master

Brethren of the priesthood, can you join me right here, right now, once again to commit and to take upon you the name of Christ? With this priesthood which you hold, can you rise up and wield the power of God to defend righteousness? Can you stand in holy places?<sup>23</sup>

We have all accepted the responsibility to pattern our life after the Master. He has committed the keys of the priesthood and of divine revelation to our living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley. He counsels: "Stay away from pornography."<sup>24</sup> "I plead with you to get it out of your life."<sup>25</sup>

Don't allow the poison to touch your souls, brethren. Remember, "He that is righteous is favored of God."<sup>26</sup> I testify of this in the name of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:33; Moses 8:17.
2. Isaiah 5:20.
3. See 2 Samuel 11; Doctrine and Covenants 132:39.
4. See Alma 53:4, 7.
5. Alma 48:17.
6. See Alma 53:4-5.
7. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 4.
8. See Galatians 5:16-21.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46.
10. See Mosiah 27:10-11; Alma 1:15.
11. See Luke 15:21.
12. See Isaiah 1:18.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 18:11.
14. See Mosiah 26:29.
15. See 2 Nephi 9:23; 26:27.
16. See Alma 34; 3 Nephi 18:29-32.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:7.
18. John 8:32.

19. See 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; Mosiah 2:41; 4:3.
20. See Articles of Faith 1:13.
21. John 13:35.
22. Matthew 11:29–30.
23. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:22.
24. In Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 54.
25. In Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51.
26. 1 Nephi 17:35.

## Elder John H. Groberg

### Unfathomable value of the priesthood

Fellow bearers of the priesthood everywhere: I hope we appreciate the priceless privilege of holding the priesthood of God. Its value is unfathomable.

Through its power, worlds—even universes—have been, are being, and will be created or organized. Through its power, ordinances are performed which, when accompanied by righteousness, allow families to be together forever, sins to be forgiven, the sick to be healed, the blind to see, and even life to be restored.

### Purity required for priesthood power

God wants us, His sons, to hold His priesthood and learn to use it properly. He has explained:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

For if we “exercise control or domination or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men [especially our wives and children], in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we see that while the power of the priesthood is unlimited, our individual power in the priesthood is limited by our degree of righteousness or purity.

Just as clean wires, properly connected, are required to carry electrical

power, so clean hands and pure hearts are required to carry priesthood power. Filth and grime slow or prevent the flow of electrical power. Unclean thoughts and actions interfere with individual priesthood power. When we are humble, clean, and pure of hand, heart, and mind, nothing righteous is impossible. An ancient Oriental saying declares, “If a man lives a pure life, nothing can destroy him.”<sup>3</sup>

### “I cannot approach God with dirty hands”

In His love for us, God has decreed that any worthy man, regardless of wealth, education, color, cultural background, or language, may hold His priesthood. Thus, any properly ordained man who is clean in hand, heart, and mind can connect with the unlimited power of the priesthood. I learned this lesson well as a young missionary years ago in the South Pacific.

My first assignment was to a small island hundreds of miles from headquarters, where no one spoke English, and I was the only white man. I was given a local companion named Feki, who was then serving a building mission and was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

After eight seasick days and nights on a small, smelly boat, we arrived at Niutopotapu. I struggled with the heat, the mosquitoes, the strange food, culture, and language, as well as homesickness. One afternoon we heard cries of anguish and saw a family bringing the limp, seemingly lifeless body of their eight-year-old son to us. They wailed out that he had fallen from a mango tree and would not respond to anything. The faithful father

and mother put him in my arms and said, "You have the Melchizedek Priesthood; bring him back to us whole and well."

Though my knowledge of the language was still limited, I understood what they wanted, and I was scared. I wanted to run away, but the expressions of love and faith that shone from the eyes of the parents and brothers and sisters kept me glued to the spot.

I looked expectantly at my companion. He shrugged and said, "I don't have the proper authority. You and the branch president hold the Melchizedek Priesthood." Grasping at that straw, I said, "Then this is the duty of the branch president."

No sooner had I said this than the branch president walked up. He had heard the commotion and returned from his garden. He was sweaty and covered with dirt and mud. I turned and explained what had happened and tried to give the young boy to him. He stepped back and said, "I will go and wash and put on clean clothes; then we will bless him and see what God has to say."

In near panic I cried, "Can't you see? He needs help now!"

He calmly replied, "I know he needs a blessing. When I have washed myself and put on clean clothes, I will bring consecrated oil, and we will approach God and see what His will is. I cannot—I will not—approach God with dirty hands and muddy clothes." He turned and left me holding the boy. I was speechless.

Finally he returned, clean in body and dress and, I sensed, in heart as well. "Now," he said, "I am clean, so we will approach the throne of God."

That marvelous Tongan branch president, with clean hands and a pure heart, gave a beautiful and powerful priesthood blessing. I felt more like a witness than a participant. The words of the Psalmist came to my mind:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? . . .

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart."<sup>4</sup>

On that tiny island a worthy priesthood holder ascended into the hill of the Lord, and the power of the priesthood came down from heaven and authorized a young boy's life to continue.

With the fire of faith glowing from his eyes, the branch president told me what to do. Much additional faith and effort were required, but on the third day that little eight-year-old boy, full of life, was reunited with his family.

### **Be pure to connect with God's power**

I hope you understand and feel these truths. This was a tiny island in the midst of a huge ocean—with no electricity, no hospital, no doctors—but none of that mattered. For in addition to great love and faith, there was a branch president who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, who understood the importance of cleanliness of hand and heart and its outward expression in cleanliness of body and dress, who exercised the priesthood in righteousness and purity according to the will of God. That day his individual power *in* the priesthood was sufficient to connect with the unlimited power *of* the priesthood over earthly life.

When I look into the heavens at night and contemplate the endless galaxies therein, I am amazed at what a tiny dot our little earth is and how infinitesimally small I am. Yet I do not feel afraid, alone, insignificant, or distant from God. For I have witnessed His priesthood power connecting with clean hands and pure hearts on a tiny island in a vast ocean.

Brethren, that connection is available to all of us, no matter where, when, or under what circumstances we live, so long as our hands, hearts, and minds are clean and pure. There is no individual power in the priesthood outside of individual purity.

We simply must work harder at purifying our lives by serving others in more Christlike ways. There are always opportunities to serve—in our families, in the Church, on missions, in temples, and among our fellowmen. Noble service requires hard work, deep sacrifice, and complete unselfishness. The more the sacrifice, the greater the resultant purity.

### **Satan tries to limit our priesthood power**

God, who is full of light, life, and love, wants us to hold and properly use His priesthood so we can transmit that light, life, and love to all about us. On the other hand, Satan, the prince of darkness, wants to hold back light, life, and love as much as he can. Since there is nothing Satan can do about the power of the priesthood, he concentrates his energy on trying to limit our individual power *in* the priesthood by attempting to dirty our hands, hearts, and minds through abuse, anger, neglect, pornography, selfishness, or any other evil he can entice us to think or do. He knows that if he can sufficiently soil us individually, he can, to that degree, keep us from the purity needed to properly exercise the priesthood and thus bring more light, life, and love to this earth and all the inhabitants thereof—past, present, and future.

Oh, brethren, please don't sell your precious priesthood birthright for a mess of X- or R-rated pottage. Remember, the sand castles we build on the beaches of mortality, no matter how elaborate, will eventually be washed away by the tide.

Only purity of hand, heart, and mind will allow us to tap into the ultimate power of the priesthood to truly bless others and eventually be able to build eternal mansions more beautiful and lasting than we can presently imagine.

### **Jesus personifies priesthood power**

I have learned for myself that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that He is my friend and your friend. I know that Jesus is the perfect personification of pure priesthood power. Follow Him.

I pray that we may all serve with more purity of heart, that our individual power in the priesthood may eventually be full through the perfect love of Him whose priesthood we bear.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
3. Attributed to Buddha.
4. Psalm 24:3–4.

### **President Monson**

What excellent messages we have just heard. This is a remarkable evening.

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, and following President Faust's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing that priesthood favorite "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah."

## **President James E. Faust**

### **"Them that honour me I will honour."**

My beloved brethren of this great worldwide brotherhood of the priesthood, I come to you humbly and prayerfully. Speaking to you is a sacred and overwhelming responsibility. I desire to

be understood. I hope that each of us can claim the promise of the Lord, "Them that honour me I will honour."<sup>1</sup>

I fully recognize all that has been accomplished by the Lord's servants in previous generations, but I believe you young men of the priesthood and the

young women of your age are in many ways the most promising generation in the history of the world. I come to this conclusion for several reasons. As Sister Faust and I read our grandchildren's patriarchal blessings, we find that almost without exception they are more promising than mine or hers.

For you to achieve your potential, you will need to honor four sacred principles in your lives. These four are:

1. Reverence for Deity.
2. Respecting and honoring family relationships.
3. Reverence for and obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the holy priesthood.
4. Respect for yourself as a son of God.

I should like to speak about these four great principles tonight.

### **Reverence for Deity**

The first is reverence for Deity. I am grateful that the Lord has blessed us as a people with temporal blessings unequaled in the history of the Church. These resources have been given to us to do good and to permit our work on earth to accelerate. But I fear that through prosperity, many of us have been preoccupied with what Daniel called "gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know."<sup>2</sup> These, of course, are idols.

In reverence for the sacred, overarching and undergirding all else is a love and respect for Deity. During most of the world's history, mankind has labored much in idolatry, either worshiping false gods or becoming preoccupied with acquiring material opulence.

After the Resurrection of the Savior, Peter and some of the disciples were at the Sea of Tiberias. Peter announced to them that he was going fishing. The disciples agreed to go with him. They seemed to have forgotten that they were called to

be fishers of men. They fished through the night but caught nothing.

In the morning Jesus, standing on the shore, told them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship, and the nets were filled with fish. Jesus told them to bring in the fish they had caught; Peter and his associates landed 153. When they came ashore they saw fish being cooked on a fire of coals, and the Savior invited them to eat the fish and some bread. After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these?"<sup>3</sup> Peter was an ardent fisherman. Catching fish was the livelihood from which the Savior called him to become a fisher of men.

The requirement that we should love the Lord above fish, bank accounts, automobiles, fine clothing, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, or any other possession is total; it is absolute. The first commandment given unto the ancient Israelites was, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."<sup>4</sup> The Savior Himself amplified this command when He told the lawyer who asked Him which was the greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."<sup>5</sup>

I am frequently offended by hearing people in public discourse and on television so casually violate the commandment "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."<sup>6</sup> We are reminded in section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants that in order "to avoid the too frequent repetition of his [holy] name,"<sup>7</sup> the holy priesthood was named after the great high priest Melchizedek. Reverence and respect for sacred things all flow from the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."<sup>8</sup>

We who have been commissioned with the priesthood authority to act in the name of the Savior need to respect God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost above all else.

## Respect and honor family relationships

The second principle is to respect and honor family relationships. This should begin with reverence for Mother's sacred love. All mothers go down into the valley of the shadow of death as they labor in birth to give us life. My mother has now been dead many years. I miss her sweet, loving influence in my life. I miss her general counsel and reproof. But mostly I miss her unconditional love. The yearning to be with her is at times almost overpowering. Most of us could say, with Abraham Lincoln, "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."<sup>9</sup>

My mother cooked, sewed, patched and remodeled clothes; she did without so that the limited amount of money could stretch to give her sons more opportunities than she ever had. But more important was her unwavering faith that she desired to plant deep into our souls.

Brethren, noble fatherhood gives us a glimpse of the divine attributes of our Father in Heaven. A father should be many things. He should magnify his priesthood and be an example of righteousness. In companionship with his wife, he should be the source of stability and strength for the whole family. He should be the protector and the provider and the champion of the members of his family. Much of his love for his children should flow from his example of love, concern, and fidelity for their mother. By his uncompromising example he should instill character into his children.

When Elder LeGrand Richards left to attend college, his father, George F. Richards, said to him and his brother, George F. Jr., "I would trust you two to go anywhere I would go myself." Their hearts swelled with love and pride in his words. LeGrand later said, "They put rods of steel in our spines, and we couldn't do anything that would disappoint him."<sup>10</sup>

A father should never consciously disappoint his wife or children. In 1989 there was a terrible earthquake in Armenia that

killed over 30,000 people in four minutes. A distraught father went in frantic search of his son. He reached his son's school only to find that it had been reduced to a pile of rubble. But he was driven by his promise to his son, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you!" He visualized the corner where his son's classroom would be, rushed there, and started to dig through the debris, brick by brick.

Others came on the scene—the fire chief, then the police—warning him of fires and explosions, and urging him to leave the search to the emergency crews. But he tenaciously carried on digging. Night came and went, and then, in the 38th hour of digging, he thought he heard his son's voice. "Armand!" he called out. Then he heard:

"Dad?! It's me, Dad! I told the other kids not to worry. I told 'em that if you were alive, you'd save me and when you saved me, they'd be saved. . . . There are 14 of us left out of 33. . . . When the building collapsed, it made a wedge, like a triangle, and it saved us."

"Come on out, boy!"

"No, Dad! Let the other kids out first, 'cause I know you'll get me! No matter what, I know you'll be there for me!"<sup>11</sup>

All family relationships should be honored, including those to our kindred dead. Love, service, and help should flow between brothers and sisters and the extended family.

## Respect priesthood ordinances and covenants

The third principle is respect for and obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the priesthood. Anciently those who participated in priesthood ordinances wore priestly attire. While we do not wear priestly attire, we show respect by wearing appropriate clothing when administering and passing the sacrament and anointing the sick.

Eli the priest was relieved of his calling when he permitted wickedness in the



house of the Lord. The Lord said, "For them that honour me I will honour."<sup>12</sup> The great priesthood power and authority with which we have been entrusted must be exercised by those authorized to do so who have proven themselves worthy to do so. Only in this manner will our acts be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise and thus be honored by the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

We honor the Lord by keeping our baptismal covenants, our sacrament covenants, and our temple covenants, and by keeping the Sabbath day holy. The Lord has said, "All among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me."<sup>14</sup>

### **Respect yourself as a son of God**

The fourth principle is to respect yourself as a son of God. Those of us who have served missions have seen the miracle in the lives of some we have taught as they have come to realize that they are sons and daughters of God. Many years ago an elder who served a mission in the British Isles said at the end of his labors, "I think my mission has been a failure. I have labored all my days as a missionary here and I have only baptized one dirty little Irish kid. That is all I baptized."

Years later, after his return to his home in Montana, he had a visitor come to his home who asked, "Are you the elder who served a mission in the British Isles in 1873?"

"Yes."

Then the man went on, "And do you remember having said that you thought your mission was a failure because you had only baptized one dirty little Irish kid?"

He said, "Yes."

The visitor put out his hand and said, "I would like to shake hands with you. My name is Charles A. Callis, of the Council

of the Twelve of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am that dirty little Irish kid that you baptized on your mission."<sup>15</sup>

That little Irish boy came to a knowledge of his potential as a son of God. Elder Callis left a lasting legacy for his large family. Serving as a mission president for 25 years and in his apostolic ministry for 13 years, he blessed the lives of literally thousands. I feel privileged to have known this great Apostle of the Lord when I was a young man.

If we are constantly aware of the seeds of divinity in us, it will help us rise above earthly challenges and difficulties. Brigham Young said: "When I look upon the faces of intelligent beings I look upon the image of the God I serve. There are none but what have a certain portion of divinity within them; and though we are clothed with bodies which are in the image of our God, yet this mortality shrinks before that portion of divinity which we inherit from our Father."<sup>16</sup> Being aware of our divine heritage will help men young and old to grow and magnify the divinity which is within them and within all of us.

All of us who wish to be honored by the Lord and receive of His goodness, mercy, and eternal blessings must, I repeat, be obedient to these four great principles:

1. Have a reverence for Deity.
2. Have respect for and honor family relationships.
3. Have a profound reverence for and obedience to the ordinances and covenants of the holy priesthood.
4. Have respect for yourself as a son of God.

### **Priesthood is the greatest force for good**

Brethren, I pray that the Lord will bless each of us in this grand army of righteous priesthood brethren. Individually, perhaps, our contribution may not seem great, but unitedly I believe the priest-

hood power we collectively hold is the greatest force for good in the earth today. It is all exercised under the priesthood keys held by President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the presiding high priest on the earth. I pray that we may be obedient to his inspired leadership and follow his example. May his remarkable ministry be extended for many years.

Brethren, I have been privileged, as boy and man, to enjoy the warm, comforting spiritual mantle of the holy priesthood for 68 years. I cannot express in words what a great and marvelous sustaining influence this has been to me and my family. Many times I have been less than I should have been. But in my weak way I have wanted to be deserving of this supernal blessing. So long as there is breath in my life, I want to be found testifying of the wonder and glory of the restored gospel with its priesthood keys and authority. May we be worthy of the Lord's promise, "Them that honour me I will honour," in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 1 Samuel 2:30.
2. Daniel 5:23.
3. See John 21:1-15.
4. Exodus 20:3.
5. Mark 12:30.
6. Exodus 20:7.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 107:4.
8. Exodus 20:3.
9. Quoted in Burton Stevenson, sel., *The Home Book of Quotations* (1934), 1350.
10. Lucile C. Tate, *LeGrand Richards: Beloved Apostle* (1982), 28.
11. Mark V. Hansen, "Are You Going to Help Me?" in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*,

ed. Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen (1993), 273-74.

12. 1 Samuel 2:30.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
15. See *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 602-3.
16. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 168.

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The choir and congregation sang "Praise to the Man."

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#### President Monson

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow. Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. Remember, brethren, we encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to a combined Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake for the beautiful music they provided this evening.

Following my remarks, it will be our privilege to listen to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. This session will conclude then with the choir singing "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder H. Bruce Stucki of the Seventy.

## President Thomas S. Monson

#### Be participants, not spectators

Mine is the overwhelming and humbling responsibility tonight to address you, my dear brethren who hold the

priesthood of God and who have assembled here in the Conference Center and throughout the world.

Some of you are deacons, perhaps newly ordained; others of you are high

priests who have served long and faithfully in sacred callings. All have assembled that we might better learn our duty.

Brethren, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service.

President Wilford Woodruff declared: "All the organizations of the Priesthood have power. The Deacon has power, through the Priesthood which he holds. So has the Teacher. They have power to go before the Lord and have their prayers heard and answered, as well as the Prophet. . . . It is by this Priesthood that men have ordinances conferred upon them, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are redeemed. For this purpose it has been revealed and sealed upon our heads."<sup>1</sup>

Once I heard from a newly ordained deacon soon after he had received the Aaronic Priesthood. He said, "Today is my first day to pass the sacrament. I can't wait. I know it is a very holy ordinance, so I'll treat it with care. I have a true testimony of the Church, and I hope to go on a mission soon."

### Who will go to the rescue?

May I share with you tonight, brethren, a letter which I received some time ago, written by a husband who strayed far from the priesthood path of service and duty. It typifies the plea of too many of our brethren. He wrote:

"Dear President Monson:

"I had so much and now have so little. I am unhappy and feel as though I am failing in everything. The gospel has never left my heart, even though it has left my life. I ask for your prayers.

"Please don't forget those of us who are out here—the lost Latter-day Saints. I know where the Church is, but sometimes I think I need someone else to show

me the way, encourage me, take away my fear, and bear testimony to me."

While reading this letter, I returned in my thoughts to a visit to one of the great art galleries of the world—even the famed Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. There, exquisitely framed, was a masterpiece painted in 1831 by Joseph Mallord William Turner. The painting features heavy-laden black clouds and the fury of a turbulent sea portending danger and death. A light from a stranded vessel gleams far off. In the foreground, tossed high by incoming waves of foaming water, is a large lifeboat. The men pull mightily on the oars as the lifeboat plunges into the tempest. On the shore there stand a wife and two children, wet with rain and whipped by wind. They gaze anxiously seaward. In my mind I abbreviated the name of the painting. To me, it became *To the Rescue*.

### The Lord expects devotion to duty

Amidst the storms of life, danger lurks; and men, like boats, find themselves stranded and facing destruction. Who will man the lifeboats, leaving behind the comforts of home and family, and go to the rescue?

President John Taylor cautioned us, "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those whom you might have saved had you done your duty."<sup>2</sup>

Brethren, our task is not insurmountable. We are on the Lord's errand, and therefore we are entitled to the Lord's help. But we must try. From the stage play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

When the Master ministered among men, He called fishermen at Galilee to leave their nets and follow Him, declaring, "I will make you fishers of men."<sup>3</sup> And so He did. Tonight He issues a call to each of us to "come join the ranks."<sup>4</sup>

He provides our battle plan with His admonition, "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."<sup>5</sup>

I love and cherish the noble word *duty*. Let us hearken to the stirring reminder found in the epistle of James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."<sup>6</sup>

There is an old song of my vintage. It's entitled "Wishing Will Make It So." It's not true. Wishing will *not* make it so. The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. He expects our labors. He expects our testimonies. He expects our devotion. Unfortunately there are those who have departed from the track of priesthood activity. Let us help them back to that path that leads to life eternal. Let us build that strong Melchizedek Priesthood base that will be the foundation of Church activity and growth. It will be the underpinning to strengthen every family, every home, every quorum in every land.

Brethren, we can reach out to those for whom we are responsible and bring them to the table of the Lord, there to feast on His word and to enjoy the companionship of His Spirit and be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."<sup>7</sup>

### **The Lord changes lives**

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives—our lives and the lives of those with whom we labor. As He said to the dead Lazarus, so He says today: "Come forth."<sup>8</sup> Come forth from the despair of doubt. Come forth from the sorrow of sin. Come forth from the death of disbelief. Come forth to a newness of life. Come forth.

We will discover that those whom we serve, who have felt through our labors the touch of the Master's hand, somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to serve

faithfully, to walk humbly, and to live more like the Savior. Having received their spiritual eyesight and glimpsed the promises of eternity, they echo the words of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight, who said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."<sup>9</sup>

How can we account for these miracles? Why the upsurge of activity in men long dormant? The poet, speaking of death, wrote, "God . . . touched him, and he slept."<sup>10</sup> I say, speaking of this new birth, "God touched them, and they awakened."

Two fundamental reasons largely account for these changes of attitudes, of habits, of actions. First, men have been shown their eternal possibilities and have made the decision to achieve them. Men cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once they see excellence is within their reach.

Second, other men have followed the admonition of the Savior and have loved their neighbors as themselves and helped to bring their neighbors' dreams to fulfillment and their ambitions to realization.

The catalyst in this process has been—and will continue to be—the principle of love.

### **Shelley's miraculous change of heart**

Another principle of truth which will guide us in our determination is that boys and men can change. I'm reminded of the words of a prison warden who taught this fact. A critic who knew of Warden Duffy's efforts to rehabilitate men said, "Don't you know that leopards can't change their spots?" Warden Duffy responded, "You should know I don't work with leopards. I work with men, and men change every day."

Many years ago, before leaving to become president of the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, I had developed a friendship with a man by the name of Shelley, who lived in my ward but did not embrace the gospel, irrespec-

tive of the fact that his wife and children had done so. Shelley had been known as the toughest man in town when he was young. He was quite a pugilist. His fights were rarely in the ring but rather elsewhere. Try as I might, I could not bring about a change in Shelley's attitude. The task appeared hopeless. In time, Shelley and his family moved from our ward.

After I had returned from Canada and was called to the Twelve, I received a telephone call from Shelley. He said, "Will you seal my wife and me and our family in the Salt Lake Temple?"

I answered hesitatingly, "Shelley, you first must be a baptized member of the Church."

He laughed and responded, "Oh, I took care of that while you were in Canada. My home teacher was a school crossing guard, and every weekday as he and I would visit at the crossing, we would discuss the gospel."

The sealings were performed; a family was united; joy followed.

### **Befriend and love those you would lift**

Abraham Lincoln offered this wise counsel, which surely applies to home teachers: "If you would win a man to your cause, *first* convince him that you are his sincere friend."<sup>11</sup>

A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit. A friend cares. A friend loves. A friend listens. And a friend reaches out.

There are brethren in every ward who seem to have a special skill and aptitude to penetrate the outer shell and reach the heart. Such was Raymond L. Egan, who served as my counselor in the bishopric. He loved to befriend and activate in the Church the father of a family and thereby bring into the fold a dear wife and precious children as well. This wonderful phenomenon occurred many times right up until Brother Egan departed mortality.

There are other ways as well by which one might lift and serve. On one occasion, I was speaking with a retired executive I had known for a long time. I asked him, "Ed, what are you doing in the Church?" He replied, "I have the best assignment in the ward. My responsibility is to help men who are unemployed find permanent employment. This year I have helped 12 of my brethren who were out of work to obtain good jobs. I have never been happier in my entire life." Short in stature, "Little Ed," as we affectionately called him, stood tall that evening as his eyes glistened and his voice quavered. He showed his love by helping those in need. He restored human dignity. He opened doors for those who knew not how to do so themselves.

I truly believe that those who have the ability to reach out and to lift up have found the formula descriptive of Brother Walter Stover—a man who spent his entire life in service to others. At Brother Stover's funeral, his son-in-law paid tribute to him in these words: "Walter Stover had the ability to see Christ in every face he encountered, and he treated each person accordingly." Legendary are his acts of compassionate help and his talent to lift heavenward every person whom he met. His guiding light was the Master's voice speaking, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me."<sup>12</sup>

### **Learn the language of the Spirit**

Brethren, acquire the language of the Spirit. It is not learned from textbooks written by men of letters, nor is it acquired through reading and memorization. The language of the Spirit comes to him who seeks with all his heart to know God and keep His divine commandments. Proficiency in this "language" permits one to breach barriers, overcome obstacles, and touch the human heart.

In a day of danger or a time of trial, such knowledge, such hope, such under-

standing bring comfort to a troubled soul and a grieving heart. Shadows of despair are dispelled by rays of hope; sorrow yields to joy; and the feeling of being lost in the crowd of life vanishes with the certain knowledge that our Heavenly Father is mindful of each of us.

In closing, I return to the painting by Turner. In a very real sense, those persons stranded on the vessel which had run aground in the storm-tossed sea are like many young men—and older men as well—who await rescue by those of us who have the priesthood responsibility to man the lifeboats. Their hearts yearn for help. Mothers and fathers pray for their sons. Wives and children plead to heaven that Daddy and others may be reached.

Tonight I pray that all of us who hold the priesthood may sense our responsibilities and, as one, follow our Leader—even the Lord Jesus Christ, and His prophet,

President Gordon B. Hinckley—to the rescue. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. In Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, 5 vols. (1987–92), 2:87.
2. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
3. Matthew 4:19.
4. "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
6. James 1:22.
7. Ephesians 2:19.
8. John 11:43.
9. John 9:25.
10. Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, section 85, stanza 5, line 4; spelling modernized.
11. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 8 vols. (1953), 1:273.
12. Matthew 25:40.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, before I begin my talk I want to congratulate very warmly this Melchizedek Priesthood choir, composed of men from many walks of life, all singing together out of their hearts filled with testimony of the hymns of Zion. Brethren, thank you very, very much.

### The Perpetual Emigration Fund

Now, I seek the inspiration of the Lord as I speak briefly on what I consider to be a very important subject.

I begin by taking you back 150 years and more. In 1849 our forebears faced a serious problem. Our people had then been in the Salt Lake Valley for two years. Missionaries in the British Isles and Europe continued to gather converts. They came into the Church by the hundreds. When they were baptized, they desired to gather to Zion. Their strength and their

skills were needed here, and their wish to come was very strong. But many of them were distressingly poor, and they had no money with which to buy passage. How were they to get here?

Under the inspiration of the Lord, a plan was devised. What was known as the Perpetual Emigration Fund was established. Under this plan, funded by the Church, notwithstanding its serious poverty at that time, money was loaned to those members who had little or nothing. Loans were made with the understanding that when the converts arrived here, they would find employment, and as they were able to do so, they would pay off the loan. The money repaid would then be loaned to others to make it possible for them to emigrate. It was a revolving resource. It was truly a Perpetual Emigration Fund.

With the help of this fund, it is estimated that some 30,000 converts to the

Church were enabled to gather to Zion. They became a great strength to the work here. Some of them came with needed skills, such as stone masonry, and others developed skills. They were able to perform a tremendous service in constructing buildings, including the Salt Lake Temple and Tabernacle, and doing other work which required expertise. They came here by wagons and by handcarts. Notwithstanding the terrible handcart tragedy of 1856, when approximately 200 of them died from cold and sickness on the plains of Wyoming, they traveled safely and became an important part of the family of the Church in these mountain valleys.

For instance, James Moyle was a stonemason in Plymouth, England, when he was baptized at the age of 17. Of that occasion he wrote:

"I then covenanted with the Lord that I would serve Him through good and evil report. It was the turning point in my life, as it kept me from evil company" (in Gordon B. Hinckley, *James Henry Moyle* [1951], 18).

Notwithstanding his skill as a mason, he had little money. He borrowed from the Perpetual Emigration Fund and left England in 1854, sailed to America, crossed the plains, and almost immediately secured employment as a stonemason on the Lion House at \$3 a day. He saved his money, and when he had \$70, the amount of his indebtedness, he promptly repaid the Emigration Fund. He said, "I then considered that I was a free man" (see *Moyle*, 19-24).

When the Perpetual Emigration Fund was no longer needed, it was dissolved. I believe that many within the sound of my voice are descendants of those who were blessed by reason of this fund. You are today prosperous and secure because of what was done for your forebears.

#### **Economic trials of young members today**

Now, my brethren, we face another problem in the Church. We have many

missionaries, both young men and young women, who are called locally and serve with honor in Mexico, Central America, South America, the Philippines, and other places. They have very little money, but they make a contribution with what they have. They are largely supported from the General Missionary Fund, to which many of you contribute, and for these contributions we are very deeply grateful.

They become excellent missionaries, working side by side with elders and sisters sent from the United States and Canada. While in this service, they come to know how the Church operates. They develop a broadened understanding of the gospel. They learn to speak some English. They work with faith and devotion. Then comes the day of their release. They return to their homes. Their hopes are high. But many of them have great difficulty finding employment because they have no skills. They sink right back into the pit of poverty from which they came.

Because of limited abilities, they are unlikely to become leaders in the Church. They are more likely to find themselves in need of welfare help. They will marry and rear families who will continue in the same cycle that they have known. Their future is bleak indeed. There are some others who have not gone on missions who find themselves in similar circumstances in development of skills to lift them from the ranks of the poor.

#### **The Perpetual Education Fund**

In an effort to remedy this situation, we propose a plan—a plan which we believe is inspired by the Lord. The Church is establishing a fund, largely from the contributions of faithful Latter-day Saints who have and will contribute for this purpose. We are deeply grateful to them. Based on similar principles to those underlying the Perpetual Emigration Fund, we shall call it the Perpetual Education Fund.

From the earnings of this fund, loans will be made to ambitious young men and women, for the most part returned missionaries, so that they may borrow money to attend school. Then when they qualify for employment, it is anticipated that they will return that which they have borrowed, together with a small amount of interest designed as an incentive to repay the loan.

It is expected that they will attend school in their own communities. They can live at home. We have an excellent institute program established in these countries, where they can be kept close to the Church. The directors of these institutes are familiar with the educational opportunities in their own cities. Initially, most of these students will attend technical schools, where they will learn such things as computer science, refrigeration engineering, and other skills which are in demand and for which they can become qualified. The plan may later be extended to training for the professions.

It is expected that these young men and women will attend institute, where the director can keep track of their progress. Those desiring to participate in the program will make application to the institute director. He will clear them through their local bishops and stake presidents to determine that they are worthy and in need of help. Their names and the prescribed amount of their loans will then be sent to Salt Lake City, where funds will be issued, payable not to the individual but to the institution where they will receive their schooling. There will be no temptation to use the money for other purposes.

We shall have a strong oversight board here in Salt Lake and a director of the program who will be an emeritus General Authority, a man with demonstrated business and technical skills and who has agreed to accept this responsibility as a volunteer.

It entails no new organization, no new personnel except a volunteer director and

secretary. It will cost essentially nothing to administer.

We shall begin modestly, commencing this fall. We can envision the time when this program will benefit a very substantial number.

### **How the fund will bless our members**

With good employment skills, these young men and women can rise out of the poverty they and generations before them have known. They will better provide for their families. They will serve in the Church and grow in leadership and responsibility. They will repay their loans to make it possible for others to be blessed as they have been blessed. It will become a revolving fund. As faithful members of the Church, they will pay their tithes and offerings, and the Church will be much the stronger for their presence in the areas where they live.

There is an old saying that if you give a man a fish, he will have a meal for a day. But if you teach him how to fish, he will eat for the remainder of his life.

Now, this is a bold initiative, but we believe in the need for it and in the success that it will enjoy. It will be carried forward as an official program of the Church with all that this implies. It will become a blessing to all whose lives it touches—to the young men and women, to their future families, to the Church that will be blessed with their strong local leadership.

It is affordable. We have enough money, already contributed, to fund the initial operation. It will work because it will follow priesthood lines and because it will function on a local basis. It will deal with down-to-earth skills and needed fields of expertise. Participation in the program will carry with it no stigma of any kind, but rather a sense of pride in what is happening. It will not be a welfare effort, commendable as those efforts are, but rather an education opportunity. The beneficiaries will repay the money, and when they do so they will enjoy a wonder-



ful sense of freedom because they have improved their lives not through a grant or gift but through borrowing and then repaying. They can hold their heads high in a spirit of independence. The likelihood of their remaining faithful and active throughout their lives will be very high.

We are already carrying forward in limited areas an employment service under the welfare program of the Church. This consists primarily of offices of referral. The matter of education will rest with the Perpetual Education Fund. The operation of employment centers will rest with the welfare program. These employment centers deal with men and women who are seeking employment and have skills but lack proper referrals. The one is a rotating education fund to make possible the development of skills. The other is the placing of men and women in improved employment who already have some marketable skills.

### **United, we can help our poor**

President Clark used to tell us in these general priesthood meetings that there is nothing that the priesthood cannot accomplish if we will work unitedly together in moving forward a program designed to bless the people (see J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 180).

May the Lord grant us vision and understanding to do those things which will help our members not only spiritually but also temporally. We have resting upon us a very serious obligation. President Joseph F. Smith said nearly a hundred years ago that a religion which will not help a man in this life will not likely do much for him in the life to come (see "The Truth about Mormonism," *Out West* magazine, Sept. 1905, 242).

Where there is widespread poverty among our people, we must do all we can to help them to lift themselves, to establish their lives upon a foundation of self-reliance that can come of training.

Education is the key to opportunity. This training must be done in the areas where they live. It will then be suited to the opportunities of those areas. And it will cost much less in such places than it would if it were done in the United States or Canada or Europe.

### **May God prosper this program**

Now, this is not an idle dream. We have the resources through the goodness and kindness of wonderful and generous friends. We have the organization. We have the manpower and dedicated servants of the Lord to make it succeed. It is an all-volunteer effort that will cost the Church practically nothing. We pray humbly and gratefully that God will prosper this effort and that it will bring blessings, rich and wonderful, upon the heads of thousands, just as its predecessor organization, the Perpetual Emigration Fund, brought untold blessings upon the lives of those who partook of its opportunities.

As I have said, some have already given very substantial amounts to fund the corpus whose earnings will be used to meet the need. But we will need considerably more. We invite others who wish to contribute to do so.

We anticipate there may be some failures in the repayment of loans. But we are confident that most will do what is expected of them, and generations will be blessed. We may anticipate that future generations will also be in need, for as Jesus said, "The poor always ye have with you" (John 12:8). It must, therefore, be a revolving fund.

It is our solemn obligation, it is our certain responsibility, my brethren, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). We must help them to become self-reliant and successful.

I believe the Lord does not wish to see His people condemned to live in poverty. I believe He would have the faithful enjoy the good things of the earth. He would

have us do these things to help them. And He will bless us as we do so. For the success of this undertaking I humbly pray, while soliciting your interest, your faith, your prayers, your concerns in its behalf. I do so in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling."

Elder H. Bruce Stucki offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 1, 2001. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice." President Monson then made the following remarks.

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Praise the Lord with Heart and Voice," and will now favor us with "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy. The choir will then sing "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," after which President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Robert J. Whetten offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

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## President James E. Faust

### Recollections of baptism

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends, the responsibility of speaking to all of you is a matter of great concern to me. I pray for your understanding.

My baptism into this Church was one of the highlights of my life. I was eight years of age. My parents taught me and my brothers the significance of this great ordinance. My mother told me that after my baptism I would be held accountable

for the things I did that were not right. I remember the day of my baptism very vividly. I was baptized in the baptismal font in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. Those who were being baptized put on white coveralls and were gently taken one by one down the steps into the water. One of the children baptized that day was not totally immersed, so the ordinance was repeated. This was necessary because, as the scriptures indicate, "baptism symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection, and can only be done by immersion."<sup>1</sup> It also follows the pattern set by the Savior, who was baptized in the river Jordan, where there was much water. As Matthew records, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water."<sup>2</sup>

Even though I was only eight years of age, the words of the baptismal prayer penetrated deeply into my soul. After repeating my name, Brother Irvin G. Derrick, who baptized me, said, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."<sup>3</sup>

Since I was baptized, more than 11 million people have been baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in a similar manner and by the same authority. They have been baptized in frozen lakes, the ocean, or ponds, some of which were dug for that purpose. One such pond has great historic significance. In 1840 Wilford Woodruff, then one of the Twelve Apostles, was serving a mission in England and felt impressed to go to a rural district near Ledbury. There he met John Benbow, who had a large farm and a small pond. John introduced him to a congregation of United Brethren who were eager to hear the gospel message. He later recorded in his journal that with no other help at hand on March 7, 1840, "I spent most of the . . . day in clearing out a pool of water and preparing it for baptizing, as I saw that many would receive that ordinance. I afterwards baptized six hundred persons in that pool of water."<sup>4</sup>

## **Baptism is spiritual rebirth**

The Savior taught us that all men and women must be born again. Nicodemus, one of the rulers among the Jews, came surreptitiously to the Savior by night and said:

"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup>

Nicodemus was bewildered and asked: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

Jesus explained that He was talking about being born spiritually. He said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."<sup>6</sup>

All of us need to be born spiritually, from 8 to 80—or even 90. When Sister Luise Wulff of the German Democratic Republic was baptized in 1989, she exclaimed, "There I was—ninety-four years old and born again!"<sup>7</sup> Our first birth takes place when we are born into mortality. Our second birth begins when we are baptized by water by one holding the priesthood of God and is completed when we are confirmed, and "then cometh a remission of [our] sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost."<sup>8</sup>

## **Baptism of Atiati in Samoa**

Some years ago Albert Peters told of the experience he and his companion had of a man being born again. One day they went to the hut of Atiati in the village of Sasina in Samoa. There they found an unshaven, unkempt, misshapen man lying

on a bed. He asked them to come in and introduce themselves. He was pleased to know they were missionaries and wanted to hear their message. They presented the first discussion, bore witness to him, and then left. As they walked away, they discussed Atiati's condition. He had had polio 22 years before that had left him without the use of his arms or legs, so how could he ever be baptized, being so completely disabled?

When they visited their new friend the next day, they were unprepared for the change in Atiati. He was bright and clean-shaven; even his bedding had been changed. "Today," he said, "I begin to live again, because yesterday my prayers were answered and you [came] to me. . . . I have waited for more than twenty years for someone to come and tell me that they have the true gospel of Christ."

For several weeks the two missionaries taught this sincere, intelligent man the principles of the gospel, and he received a strong witness of the truth and the need for baptism. He asked them to fast with him so that he would have the strength to go down into the water and be baptized. The nearest baptismal font was eight miles away. So they carried him to their car, drove him to the chapel, and set him on a bench. Their district leader opened the service by bearing a strong testimony about the sacred ordinance of baptism. Then Elder Peters and his companion picked up Atiati and carried him to the font. As they did so, Atiati said, "Please, put me down." They hesitated, and he said again, "Put me down."

As they stood in some confusion, Atiati smiled and exclaimed, "This is the most important event in my life. I know without a doubt in my mind that this is the only way to eternal salvation. *I will not be carried to my salvation!*" So they lowered Atiati to the ground. After a huge effort, he managed to pull himself up. The man who had lain 20 years without moving was now standing. Slowly, one shaky step at a

time, Atiati went down the steps and into the water, where the astonished missionary took him by the hand and baptized him. He then asked to be carried from the font to the chapel, where he was confirmed a member of the Church.

Atiati continued to progress so that he gained the ability to walk only by a cane. He told Elder Peters that he knew that he would be able to walk on the morning of his baptism. He said, "Since faith can move a stubborn mountain, I had no doubt in my mind that it would mend these limbs of mine."<sup>9</sup> I believe we can say that Atiati was truly born again!

### Standards of worthiness for baptism

Like Atiati, when we are baptized we are spiritually born of God and are entitled to receive His image in our countenances.<sup>10</sup> We should experience a mighty change of heart<sup>11</sup> so that we can "become new creatures"<sup>12</sup> and exercise faith in the redemption of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in order to maintain our standards of worthiness. The personal standards of worthiness to be baptized into this Church are plain:

"All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church."<sup>13</sup>

### The transcendent gift of the Holy Ghost

Baptism by immersion in water "is the introductory ordinance of the gospel, and must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete."<sup>14</sup> As the Prophet Joseph Smith once said:

"You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost."<sup>15</sup>

The full benefit of forgiveness of sin through the Savior's Atonement begins with repentance and baptism and then expands upon receiving the Holy Ghost. As Nephi said, baptism is the gate, "and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost."<sup>16</sup> The baptismal gate opens the way for additional covenants and blessings through priesthood and temple blessings.

The transcendent gift of the Holy Ghost, along with membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is bestowed by confirmation, by the laying on of hands by those having priesthood authority. This was made clear by Paul to the Ephesians when he asked:

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

"Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them."<sup>17</sup>

### **Holy Ghost guides, protects, testifies**

If worthy, those possessing this spiritual gift can come to enjoy greater understanding and enrichment and guidance in all of life's activities, both spiritual and temporal. The Holy Ghost bears witness

to us of the truth and impresses upon our souls the reality of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, so surely that no earthly power or authority can separate us from that knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, not having the gift of the Holy Ghost is somewhat like having a body without an immune system.

We believe the Spirit of Christ comes to all men and women.<sup>19</sup> This is distinct from the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>20</sup> Many outside the Church have received revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost, convincing them of the truth of the gospel. Through this power, sincere investigators acquire a testimony of the Book of Mormon and the principles of the gospel before baptism. However, administrations of the Holy Ghost are limited without receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Those who possess the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism and confirmation can receive more light and testimony. This is because the gift of the Holy Ghost is "a permanent witness and higher endowment than the ordinary manifestation of the Holy Spirit."<sup>21</sup> It is the higher endowment because the gift of the Holy Ghost can act as "a cleansing agent to purify a person and sanctify him from all sin."<sup>22</sup>

### **Baptism for the dead**

Because baptism by water and of the Spirit is essential for full salvation, in the eternal nature of things all of God's children should have this opportunity, including those who have lived in centuries past. The doctrine of baptism of the living for the dead was understood and practiced in the early Christian church. Paul, in his great discussion about the Resurrection, reasoned: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"<sup>23</sup>

Doing something so vital for those who cannot do it for themselves is truly Christlike. By laying down His life to atone for the sins of all mankind, Jesus did that for us which we cannot do for ourselves. The prophet Malachi referenced this concept when he spoke of the coming of the prophet Elijah, who would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [the Lord] come and smite the earth with a curse."<sup>24</sup> This is accomplished in large measure through vicarious work for the dead.

No other organization on the earth is doing more to fulfill Malachi's promise than the Church. At great expense and effort the Church is now the custodian of the greatest treasure of family records in the world. The Church now has 660 million names on the FamilySearch™ Internet Web site.<sup>25</sup> These records are freely shared with anyone who wishes to research them.

### Walk in newness of life

As I have lived so many years since my baptism by water, I have come to savor the spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost that come through baptism of the Spirit. I was confirmed 72 years ago by one having authority, Joseph A. F. Everett, a close friend of my parents and a very noble man.

I humbly pray that the Spirit of the Lord will put His seal upon the importance of the things about which I have spoken. I witness that we cannot be fully converted until we "walk in newness of life"<sup>26</sup> and are at heart a new person, "purged from [our] old sins."<sup>27</sup> This can come about only by being born again of the water and of the Spirit through baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. In this way we receive divine forgiveness, by which we can know in our

hearts that our sins are remitted.<sup>28</sup> I know this to be true and so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, "Baptism," 618; see also Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:37-39; Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 2:12; Doctrine and Covenants 20:72-74; 128:12-13.
2. Matthew 3:16.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.
4. As quoted in Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (1964), 117.
5. John 3:2-3.
6. John 3:4-6.
7. "Born Again at 94," *Tambuli*, June 1994, 24.
8. 2 Nephi 31:17.
9. See Albert Peters, "One Trembling Step at a Time," *Ensign*, June 1994, 56-58.
10. See Alma 5:14.
11. See Alma 5:14.
12. Mosiah 27:26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
14. Bible Dictionary, "Baptism," 618.
15. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 314.
16. 2 Nephi 31:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:31.
17. Acts 19:2-6.
18. See 2 Nephi 31:18.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
20. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 199.
21. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965-75], 5:4.
22. Bible Dictionary, "Holy Ghost," 704.
23. 1 Corinthians 15:29.
24. Malachi 4:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 138:47; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
25. See [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).
26. Romans 6:4.
27. 2 Peter 1:9.
28. See Mosiah 4:3.

### President Monson

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bish-

opric will speak to us. The choir and congregation will then sing "Redeemer of Israel," and following the singing, Sister Carol B. Thomas, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

### Discipleship in today's hostile wilderness

Granted, brothers and sisters, the world is "in commotion," but the kingdom is in forward motion as never before! (see D&C 88:91; 45:26). Its distinctiveness is being more sharply defined by adverse trends in the world, where traditional values are not fastened down by the rivets of the Restoration (see D&C 105:31). They are sliding swiftly.

The results are contradictory mixtures, such as boredom and violence. Some individuals simply exist, "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12; see also Alma 41:11). The trek of modern discipleship is taking us through this hostile wilderness, including cultures ambivalent about setting limits and with no brakes!

Yes, we have unprecedented mass entertainment and mass communications but so many lonely crowds. The togetherness of technology is no substitute for the family.

### Valiantly enduring trials refines us

Much as I lament the resulting and gathering storms, there can be some usefulness in them. Thereby we may become further tamed spiritually, for "except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him" (Helaman 12:3). The Lord is always quietly refining His faithful people individually anyway, but events will also

illuminate God's higher ways and His kingdom (see D&C 136:31).

Our context is challenging, however. We have many overwhelmed parents, more and more marriages in meltdown, and dysfunctional families. Destructive consequences impact steadily from drugs, violence, and pornography. Truly, "despair cometh . . . of iniquity" (Moroni 10:22). Since the adversary desireth "that all men might be miserable like unto himself," his is the plan of misery (2 Nephi 2:27; see also verse 18).

The valiant among us keep moving forward anyway, because they know the Lord loves them, even when they "do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17). As you and I observe the valiant cope successfully with severe and relentless trials, we applaud and celebrate their emerging strength and goodness. Yet the rest of us tremble at the tuition required for the shaping of such sterling character, while hoping we would not falter should similar circumstances come to us!

### Disciples stand fast in a troubled world

It may be too late to fix some communities, but not to help those individuals and families willing to fix themselves. It is not too late, either, for some to become pioneer disciples in their families and locations—or for individuals to become local peacemakers in a world from which peace has been taken (see D&C

1:35). If still others experience a shortage of exemplars, they can become such.

While Joshua was able to say, "But as for me and my house . . ." (Joshua 24:15), some individuals, presently bereft of intact families, nevertheless can still say, "But as for me . . ." and then so live as to become worthy of all the Lord has prepared for them. Thus, disciples "stand fast" (D&C 9:14), "hold out faithful to the end" (D&C 6:13), and "hold on [their] way" (D&C 122:9), even in a troubled world.

However, enduring and submitting are not passive responses at all, but instead are actually more like being braced sufficiently to report for advanced duties, while carrying—meekly and victoriously—bruises from the previous frays.

What are a few fingers of scorn now anyway, when the faithful can eventually know what it is like to be "clasped in the arms of Jesus"? (Mormon 5:11; see also 1 Nephi 8:33).

What are mocking words now, if later we hear those glorious words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? (Matthew 25:21).

### **"Plow in hope"**

Meanwhile, Paul urges us to "plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Therefore, desperately needed is longitudinal perspective, the hope of the gospel. Today's *put-down* is then placed in the perspective of our being *lifted up* tomorrow in God's plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16).

Since the Lord wants a people "tried in all things" (D&C 136:31), how, specifically, will we be tried? He tells us, I will try the faith and the patience of my people (see Mosiah 23:21). Since faith in the timing of the Lord may be tried, let us learn to say not only, "Thy will be done," but patiently also, "Thy timing be done."

Hope feasts on the words of Christ, "through patience and comfort of the scriptures," "written for our learning" (Romans 15:4), and bolstered by "having

all these witnesses" (Jacob 4:6; see also 2 Nephi 31:20). Faith constitutes "the assurance of things hoped for" and the proof of "things not seen" (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1; see also Ether 12:6). Therefore, whatever our humble furrow, we are to "plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10), finally developing "a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20; see also Alma 29:4).

Yet too many of the partially committed, like Naaman, wait for the Lord to bid them to "do some great thing," while declining His biddings in small things (2 Kings 5:13). When Naaman was humbled and corrected, not only did his flesh become like that of a little child, but his heart also (see 2 Kings 5:14–15). Failure to serve the Master in small ways estranges us from Him (see Mosiah 5:13).

Those, however, who "plow in hope" not only understand the law of the harvest, but they also understand what growing seasons are all about. True, those with genuine hope may see their proximate circumstances shaken like a kaleidoscope at times, yet with the "eye of faith" they still see divine design (Alma 5:15).

### **Atonement is the source of ultimate hope**

Ultimate hope, of course, is tied to Jesus and the great Atonement, with its free gift of the universal Resurrection and the proffer of God's greatest gift, eternal life (see Moroni 7:40–41; Alma 27:28; D&C 6:13; 14:7).

Several scriptures describe the essence of Christ's glorious and rescuing Atonement, including a breathtaking autobiographical verse confiding, "Would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18). Since the "infinite atonement" required infinite suffering, the risk of recoil was there! (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:12). All humanity hung on the hinge of Christ's character! Mercifully, He did not shrink but "finished [His] preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19).



But Christ's unique submissiveness has always been in place. Indeed, He has "suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11), keenly observing His Father all the while: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).

This verse carries intimations of grand things—beyond the beyond.

In the agonizing atoning process, Jesus let His will be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7). As sovereigns, choosing to yield to the Highest Sovereign is our highest act of choice. It is the only surrender which is also a victory! The *putting off* of the natural man makes possible the *putting on* of the whole armor of God, which would not fully fit before! (see Ephesians 6:11, 13).

Redeeming Jesus also "poured out his soul unto death" (Mosiah 14:12; see also Isaiah 53:12; D&C 38:4). As we on occasion "pour" out our souls in personal pleadings, we are thus emptied, making room for more joy!

### **Paying the full dues of discipleship**

Another fundamental scripture describes Jesus' having trodden the winepress of the "fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (D&C 88:106; see also D&C 76:107; 133:50). Others can and should encourage, commend, pray, and comfort, but the lifting and carrying of our individual crosses remains ours to do. Given the "fierceness" Christ endured for us, we cannot expect a discipleship of unruffled easiness. As we seek forgiveness, for example, repentance can be a rough-hewn regimen to bear. By the way, let us not, as some do, mistake the chips we have placed on our own shoulders for crosses!

Uniquely, atoning Jesus also "descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things" (D&C 88:6; see also D&C 122:8). How deep that descent

into despair and abysmal agony must have been! He did it to rescue us and in order to comprehend human suffering. Therefore, let us not resent those tutoring experiences that can develop our own empathy further (see Alma 7:11–12). A slothful heart will not do, and neither will a resentful heart. So being admitted fully to "the fellowship of his sufferings" requires the full dues of discipleship (Philippians 3:10; see also 1 Corinthians 1:9).

Moreover, Jesus not only took upon Him our sins to atone for them, but also our sicknesses and aching griefs (see Alma 7:11–12; Matthew 8:17). Hence, He knows personally all that we pass through and how to extend His perfect mercy—as well as how to succor us. His agony was all the more astonishing in that He trod "the wine-press alone" (D&C 133:50).

On occasion the God of heaven has wept (see Moses 7:28). One ponders, therefore, the agonies of Jesus' infinite Atonement and the feelings of the Father—for His Son and for us. There are no instructive, relevant revelations, but our finite, emotional extrapolations come flooding in anyway!

If, like the Savior, we do not "shrink," then we must go with the demanding flow of discipleship, including where the tutoring doctrines of the Master take us. Otherwise, we may walk with Jesus up to a point but then walk no more with Him (see John 6:66). Shrinking includes stopping as well as turning back.

### **"Learn of me"**

The more we know of Jesus, the more we will love Him. The more we know of Jesus, the more we will trust Him. The more we know of Jesus, the more we will want to be like Him and be with Him by becoming the manner of men and women that He wishes us to be (see 3 Nephi 27:27), while living now "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27).

Therefore, with the help of the Holy Ghost, we can glorify Christ by repent-

ing and thereby accessing the blessings of the astonishing Atonement, which He provided for us at such a stunning cost! (see John 16:14). So, brothers and sisters, given what Jesus *died for*, are we willing to *live with* the challenges allotted to us? (see Alma 29:4, 6). Trembling is sometimes both permissible and understandable.

There are many specific ways in which we can liken to ourselves these “essence” scriptures about Jesus and the Atonement, but all are covered under this conceptual canopy: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:29). In fact, there is no other way to learn deeply! (see 1 Nephi 19:23). The infinite Atonement is so vast and universal, but finally, it is so very personal! Mercifully, through the Atonement we can be forgiven and, very importantly, we can know that we have been forgiven—that final, joyous emancipation from error.

By utilizing the Atonement, we access the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which “fill-

eth with hope and perfect love” (Moroni 8:26). None of us can afford to be without that needed hope and love in the treks through our Sinais of circumstance!

### Plow to the end of the furrow

Thus, within the discipleship allotted to us we are to overcome the world (see 1 John 5:3–4); to finish the work we personally have been given to do; to be able to partake of a bitter cup without becoming bitter; to experience pouring out our souls; to let our wills increasingly be swallowed up in the will of the Father; to acknowledge—tough though the tutoring trials are—that indeed “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7); and to plow enduringly to the end of the furrow—all the while glorifying Him and using the matchless gifts He has given us, including, one day, all that He has (D&C 84:38).

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

## Bishop Keith B. McMullin

### An urgent voice of warning

To those who yearn for spiritual truth, some things become self-evident. I bear my witness of these things. God is in His heavens. We mortals are His spirit offspring. Jesus is our Redeemer. Joseph Smith was God’s prophet, and Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet today. Revelations are pouring forth as in days of old. The kingdom of God, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is once more upon the earth.

Satan is real and is on the earth as well. He and his legions are wreaking havoc among the children of men. He speaks no truth, feels no love, promotes no good, and avows nothing but mayhem and destruction.

Therefore, I raise this day a “voice of warning.”<sup>1</sup> It is an urgent, sobering re-

minder and invitation to good men and women everywhere. Listen to these words of revelation received on November 1, 1831:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.”<sup>2</sup>

### Beware of worldly ways

The Lord speaks of calamity to befall the inhabitants of the earth. Calamities

come in different forms. From time to time the forces of nature convulse, and we are wrenched by their destructive powers.

Even more devastating, however, are the calamitous forces of evil which surfeit us continually. In accordance with the prophecy of 1831, peace has now been taken from the earth, and the devil has power over his dominion. His beguiling ways are mesmerizing the people. Temptation is on every hand. Crassness and wrangling have become a way of life. What was once considered awful is now considered tame; what at first titillates, soon captivates and then destroys.

This calamity of evil will continue to spread until "the whole world . . . groaneth . . . under the bondage of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, this "voice of warning":

- *Beware of worldly lusts.* They stimulate the senses but enslave the soul. Those caught in the web of sensuality find that it is not easily broken.

- *Beware of worldly wealth.* Its promises are enticing, but its happiness is a mirage. Wrote the Apostle Paul, "The love of money is the root of all evil."<sup>4</sup>

- *Beware of worldly preoccupation with self.* The highs are counterfeit; the lows are despairing. Love, kindness, personal fulfillment, and genuine self-worth are found in service to God and others, not in service to oneself.

### **The Church provides a safe harbor**

In the midst of these perils, there is a safe harbor. From the revelation cited earlier comes this assurance:

"And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world."<sup>5</sup>

There is safety in being a Saint. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ today are known as Latter-day Saints. In addition to being the Lord's designation of those who belong to His Church, this appellation also serves as His invitation to a better way of life.

This became clear to me some years ago when, as a young father, I needed to purchase some temple clothing. When I entered the store, my attention was drawn to a sign that read "For Latter-day Saints Only." The message jolted me. In my mind an argument ensued. "Why does it say 'For Latter-day Saints Only'?" I asked myself. "Why doesn't it say something like 'For Endowed Church Members'?" Why does it raise this issue of being a "Latter-day Saint"?

The years since have tempered my impetuous nature. That argumentative encounter of long ago has become a treasured, defining moment. The experience taught me that just being a member of this Church is not enough. Nor is merely going through the motions of membership sufficient in this day of cynicism and unbelief. The spirituality and vigilance of a saint are required.

### **Becoming the Lord's covenant people**

Being saintly is to be good, pure, and upright. For such persons, virtues are not only declared but lived. For Latter-day Saints, the kingdom of God, or the Church, is not a byline; rather, it is the center and the substance of their lives. Home is "a bit of heaven,"<sup>6</sup> not a hotel. The family is not merely a societal or biological entity. It is the basic eternal unit in God's kingdom, wherein the gospel of Jesus Christ is taught and lived. Indeed, Latter-day Saints diligently strive to become a little better, a little kinder, a little nobler in the daily affairs of life.

The Lord sets forth the way in which such progress is made. Said He, "Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness."<sup>7</sup>

Holding to this course provides Latter-day Saints the means for avoiding the treacherous shoals of worldliness. Living this way enables members of the Church to become the covenant people of the Lord. For our time, we have the follow-

ing prophetic guidance from President Hinckley on how this can be done:

"We are a covenant people. I have had the feeling that if we could just encourage our people to live by three or four covenants everything else would take care of itself. . . .

"*The first of these is the covenant of the sacrament*, in which we take upon ourselves the name of the Savior and agree to keep His commandments with the promise in His covenant that He will bless us with His spirit. . . .

"*Second, the covenant of tithing*. . . . The promise . . . is that He will stay the destroyer and open the windows of heaven and pour down blessings that there will not be room enough to receive them. . . .

"*Three, the covenants of the temple*: Sacrifice, the willingness to sacrifice for this the Lord's work—and inherent in that law of sacrifice is the very essence of the Atonement. . . . Consecration, which is associated with it, a willingness to give everything, if need be, to help in the on-rolling of this great work. And a covenant of love and loyalty one to another in the bonds of marriage, fidelity, chastity, morality.

"*If our people could only learn to live by these covenants, everything else would take care of itself, I am satisfied.*"<sup>8</sup>

### **Covenants help us resist worldly ways**

*Worldly lusts* lose their allure as the holy sacrament assumes its proper place in our lives. This covenant enables the faithful to keep themselves "unspotted from the world."<sup>9</sup>

*Worldly wealth* loses its peril through conscientious adherence to the Lord's tithe. Returning to Him a tithe of all He provides engenders in the giver a love of God above all else. It introduces the obedient to the higher law of giving without command. The fast and fast offerings are embraced, and power comes to loose the bands of wickedness, lift heavy burdens,

bless the less fortunate, and strengthen family ties.<sup>10</sup> The covenant of tithing weans the faithful from the love of money and its attendant trappings.

*Worldly preoccupation with self* surrenders to sacrifice, consecration, and the other holy covenants of the temple. As the Redeemer of the world gave all that we might be saved, these covenants allow us to give our all in the accomplishment of Heavenly Father's purposes for His children.

And so, fear not. The things deemed weak by the world overthrow evils that appear so mighty and strong. Righteous men speak in the name of God the Lord. Faith increases in the earth. The everlasting covenants blossom in the lives of Latter-day Saints. The fulness of Christ's gospel is proclaimed by precept and example unto the ends of the world. And the Lord's covenant people prepare this earth for His Second Coming.<sup>11</sup> This is our duty. May the Lord sustain us in it is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 35.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:49.
4. 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.
6. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 520.
7. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; see Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 146–47; italics added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9; see also verses 10, 12–13.
10. See Isaiah 58:6–11.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:19–23.

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The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

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## Sister Carol B. Thomas

### Importance of living the law of sacrifice

As a mother, I think one of the most heart-wrenching stories in the Old Testament is that of Abraham, asked by the Lord to offer his young son Isaac as a sacrifice. Sarah must have been at least 100 years old when Isaac was taken to the mountain. Out of kindness to her, I think Abraham might not have told her what he intended to do, and that meant he had to bear this great test of faith alone.

President Lorenzo Snow said, "No mortal man could have done what Abraham did . . . except he were inspired and had a divinity within him to receive that inspiration" (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 116).

Beginning with Adam, all Old Testament prophets have kept the law of sacrifice. Sacrifice is integral to the celestial law, pointing us to the most glorious sacrifice of all: our Savior Jesus Christ.

President Gordon B. Hinckley defined sacrifice so beautifully when he said:

"Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God. . . . 'The Father gave his Son, and the Son gave his life,' and we do not worship unless we give—give of our substance, . . . our time, . . . strength, . . . talent, . . . faith, . . . [and] testimonies" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 565).

Brothers and sisters, the law of sacrifice is one of the things that sets us apart from the rest of the world. We are a covenant people, blessed with opportunities to worship and to give; but are we fully converted to the principle of sacrifice? I'm reminded of the wealthy young man, taught by the Savior, who asked, "What do I still lack in my life?" (see Matthew 19:20). Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell [all] that thou hast . . . and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

Let's discuss three ways that sacrifice can help us follow the Savior: teaching

our families, giving to the poor and needy, and sharing ourselves in missionary work.

### Teach family to sacrifice

First, how can we teach our families to sacrifice? My grandfather Isaac Jacob was a great example to me. Grandpa was a sheep rancher who sent four sons on missions. During the Depression it became my mother's opportunity to serve, and she received her call to Canada.

Grandpa's situation became critical when he was called in by his bank and asked just what was the \$50 a month going out for Mom's mission. He had taken out a loan and was paying a high rate of 12 percent interest. The bankers were not satisfied and told him to bring Mom home from her mission.

The following day Grandpa gave his answer: "If that girl comes home, the sheep are yours—and I'll bring them right up to your door." This caught the bankers by surprise. They were already using Grandpa to care for other sheep outfits which they had acquired, and they would have no one else to take care of all those sheep. Mom completed her mission, and Grandpa's example taught his family the importance of sacrifice.

As we teach our families to sacrifice, we should also teach them to deny themselves. The story is told of the Civil War general Robert E. Lee, who, when asked by a woman for advice in raising her child, said, "Teach [your child] to deny himself" (see Joseph Packard, *Recollections of a Long Life*, ed. Thomas J. Packard [1902], 158).

We must avoid saturating our children with material things. We may deprive a child of enjoyment when we give him too much. If we never allow him to want something, he will never enjoy the pleasure of receiving it.

Are we encouraging our children to sacrifice by giving of their time and re-

sources, such as helping a lonely neighbor or befriending someone who needs it? As they concentrate on the needs of others, their own needs become less important. True joy comes from sacrificing for others.

### **Share material possessions**

Second, we can give more generously to the poor and needy. As I visit with Church members, I am overwhelmed with the goodness of faithful Latter-day Saints. A young man in Colombia, raised by his grandmother, owned several shoe repair shops and served as the custodian in his ward. When he was called on a mission, he had not only saved enough money to pay for his own mission but also contributed extra funds to support another missionary.

What about sharing our food, clothing, and furniture? The Lord commands that we not covet our property (see D&C 19:26). In many places we are blessed to have Deseret Industries. We can teach our children to go through their closets regularly and share their clothing while it is still in style, allowing others to dress fashionably too.

Many rewards come from sharing our material possessions. King Benjamin reminds us of this when he says, "For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, . . . such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief" (Mosiah 4:26). We can all be searching for the many opportunities in our lives to give—to share.

### **Be excited about missionary work**

The third area of sacrifice is missionary work. As part of our assignment in visiting wards and branches throughout the Church, we see the tremendous need for

senior missionaries. You can't imagine what a great good they do as they love the missionaries and teach the local members the doctrine and culture of the Church.

Recently President Hinckley visited a stake conference in an affluent area where only four older couples were serving missions. Hoping to inspire more members to serve, he promised them that their children and grandchildren would not even miss them while they're gone. With the invention of e-mail, friendly letters can be sent and received by senior missionaries just about any day.

Your years of experience will bless others, and you'll discover how wonderful people really are. The missions of the world need you! Pray for that spirit of adventure and a desire to serve a mission. You'll enjoy more excitement than motor-home travel or rocking chairs.

Young people, we hope you are excited about missionary work. Last week each young woman in the Church was invited to bring one other young woman into full activity. How great it would be if the young men would join us in this effort!

Many of you are doing remarkable things. Megan, a young woman, prayed many months for two friends who were not members of the Church, arranging for one friend to sign up for seminary and inviting the other to be taught by the missionaries. Recently these two young women were baptized. The Church needs you. President Hinckley cannot walk down the halls of your school and teach your friends, but you can, and the Lord is counting on you. We're so proud of the courage you have as you share your love for the gospel with your friends.

### **Sacrifice is an eternal investment**

Sacrifice is an amazing principle. As we willingly give our time and talents and all that we possess, it becomes one of our

truest forms of worship. It can develop within us a profound love for each other and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Through sacrifice our hearts can be changed; we live closer to the Spirit and have less of an appetite for things of the world.

President Hinckley taught a grand truth when he said: "It is not a sacrifice to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is never a sacrifice when you get back more than you give. It is an investment, . . . a greater investment than any . . . because its divi-

dends are eternal and everlasting" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 567-68).

How comforting to know that we are not expected to make this investment alone. Like Abraham of old, we have a divinity within us to receive inspiration through the powers of heaven. Brothers and sisters, I pray that by doing these things we will come to love the principle of sacrifice, that this great principle will bring us closer to our Savior, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Prophet's voice gives clear directions

Brothers and sisters, have you ever had the experience of driving around and around the streets of a city with the driver saying, "I know where it is; I'm sure I can find it"? Finally, in frustration, *he* stops and asks someone for directions. I can tell you sisters have experienced this! How much easier it is to find our way when we follow the directions of someone who knows how to locate our destination.

Many of us may find ourselves in a similar situation as we make our way through life's challenging thoroughfares. These are difficult times, and the world's cultural and sociological landmarks of propriety, honesty, integrity, and political correctness are constantly shifting. Just when we think we know the way to happiness and peace, some new ideology comes along which can lead us down a path that will only heighten our confusion and intensify our despair. At such times, we might well ask, "Is there one clear, unpolluted, unbiased voice that we can always count on? Is there a voice that will always give us clear directions to find our way in today's troubled world?" The answer is yes. That voice is the voice of the living prophet and apostles.

### "Give heed unto all his words"

When The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized 171 years ago this month, the Lord gave a revelation to the members of the Church through His prophet, Joseph Smith Jr. Speaking of the President of the Church, the Savior instructed Church members to "give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (D&C 21:4-5).

Then the Lord gave a magnificent promise to those who are obedient: "For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory" (D&C 21:6).

A year and a half later the Lord added to that significant promise this stern warning:

"The arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles,

shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14).

"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

It is no small thing, my brothers and sisters, to have a prophet of God in our midst. Great and wonderful are the blessings that come into our lives as we listen to the word of the Lord given to us through him. At the same time, knowing that President Gordon B. Hinckley is God's prophet also endows us with responsibility. When we hear the counsel of the Lord expressed through the words of the President of the Church, our response should be positive and prompt. History shows that there is safety, peace, prosperity, and happiness in responding to prophetic counsel as did Nephi of old: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7).

### **Naaman resists, then follows the prophet**

We know of the experience of Naaman, who was struck with leprosy and who eventually contacted the prophet Elisha and was instructed to "go and wash in [the] Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:10).

At first, Naaman was unwilling to follow Elisha's counsel. He couldn't understand the thing he had been asked to do—to wash seven times in the Jordan River. In other words, his pride and stubbornness were keeping him from receiving the Lord's blessing through His prophet. Finally he went down and "dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14).

What a humbling thing it must have been for Naaman to realize how close he came to allowing his own pride and his unwillingness to listen to the counsel of the prophet to prevent him from receiving such a great, cleansing blessing. And what a humbling thing it is to contemplate how many of us might miss out on great and promised blessings because we do not listen *and then do* the relatively simple things our prophet is telling us to do today.

### **President Hinckley's addresses on youth**

In the last year, for example, President Hinckley has delivered three landmark addresses about strengthening the family—and particularly the youth and young adults of the Church. First he spoke very directly on the subject to mothers during the October general Relief Society meeting. Then he spoke to fathers and priesthood leaders during the priesthood session of general conference. Remember, fathers? He reminded you parents that "you have entered into a partnership with our Father in Heaven to give mortal experience to His sons and daughters. They are His children and they are your children, flesh of your flesh, for whom He will hold you responsible" ("Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 97).

And then last November, from this very pulpit, President Hinckley spoke to all of the young people of the Church. In heartfelt teaching that will long be remembered, he challenged the youth of the Church to set goals for themselves to *be grateful, be smart, be clean, be true, be humble, and be prayerful* (see "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 4). The six "B's," as President Hinckley called them, are a marvelous standard for all Latter-day Saints. He repeated these principles to the young women in their meeting last week, and I believe they apply to mothers and fathers



as much as they do to youth and young single adults. As parents and adult leaders of youth, we cannot expect our young people to take to heart the things the prophet says to them if we show a complacent attitude toward his counsel in our own lives.

It is significant to remember that President Hinckley petitioned the Lord on behalf of our young people. He said:

"I want you to know that I have been on my knees asking the Lord to bless me with the power and the capacity and the language to reach into your hearts" (*Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2).

During the priesthood session President Hinckley said: "I hope [your sons and daughters] can share their burden with you, their fathers and mothers. I hope that you will listen, that you will be patient and understanding, that you will draw them to you and comfort and sustain them in their loneliness. Pray for direction. Pray for patience. Pray for the strength to love even though the offense may have been serious. Pray for understanding and kindness and, above all, for wisdom and inspiration" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51).

### **Are we listening?**

Have we studied his counsel and identified the things we need to avoid or to do differently? I know a 17-year-old who, just prior to the prophet's talk, had pierced her ears a second time. She came home from the fireside, took off the second set of earrings, and simply said to her parents, "If President Hinckley says we should only wear one set of earrings, that's good enough for me."

Wearing two pair of earrings may or may not have eternal consequences for this young woman, but her willingness to obey the prophet will. And if she will obey him now, on something relatively simple, how much easier it will be to follow him when greater issues are at stake.

Are we listening, brothers and sisters? Are we hearing the words of the prophet to us as parents, as youth leaders, and as youth? Or are we letting ourselves, as Naaman did *at first*, be blinded by pride and stubbornness, which could prevent us from receiving the blessings that come from following the teachings of God's prophet?

Today I make you a promise. It's a simple one, but it is true. If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray.

### **Discuss and apply the prophet's counsel**

Now, my brothers and sisters and youth of the Church, please do not miss the opportunity to sit down together as a family and discuss the counsel given by President Hinckley. Parents, teach each other and your children in family home evenings and family councils. Leaders, know and teach these principles in lessons and leadership meetings, and discuss in ward and stake council meetings how to bless the lives of our members, both young and old.

All three of the President's addresses, along with messages to the youth from his counselors, have been published in the *Ensign* and the *Liahona* magazines. *President Gordon B. Hinckley Speaks to Youth and Parents* is now available on video and is a wonderful resource for family home evening and for bishop's youth discussions. Bishops, we did not send this to you to sit on your filing cabinet. Please see that the youth of your ward listen again and understand and commit to live as directed by the President of the Church.

### **Do not disregard the prophet's words**

Now I speak directly to the young people of the Church on this important subject of following the prophet. As I have traveled throughout the Church the past few months, I have noticed that many of you are eagerly following his counsel.

Many of you have already made the decision to be even more well groomed than you were before. Many of you are striving more diligently to avoid evil talk, to choose your friends wisely, to stay away from pornography and illicit drugs, to not attend evil concerts and dangerous parties, to respect your bodies and keep yourselves morally clean in every way.

To those of you who have not listened yet, I caution you to not disregard the counsel of the President of the Church. He has spoken to you plainly. Study his words and strive to obey them. They are true and come from God. We encourage you who need to repent to go forward with faith and become clean before the Lord. Each one of you is preparing now to be a leader in the Church in the future, and we need you to be clean and faithful and true to the Lord.

Never forget how it felt to listen as President Hinckley prayed for you. Did you feel how precious you are as he prayed? "Bless them that they may walk acceptably before Thee as Thy cherished sons and daughters. Each is Thy child with the capacity to do great and noble things" (*Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 11).

### ***Listen with your heart—then do***

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, please pay attention to those things that the leaders of the Church have taught during this general conference. Apply the teachings that will help you and your family. Let all of us, regardless of our family circumstances, bring into our homes the teachings of the prophets and the apostles to strengthen our relationships with each other, with our Father in Heaven, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. I promise you in the name of the Lord that if you will listen not just with your ears but also

with your heart, the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth unto you of the messages delivered by President Hinckley, his counselors, the Apostles, and other leaders of the Church. The Spirit will prompt you to know what you should do as individuals and as families in order to follow our counsel, that your testimonies might be strengthened and that you might have peace and joy.

My brothers and sisters, I testify to you that the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Today we are blessed to be led by God's prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. May we *listen* and *then do* those things that he teaches us is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "O My Father."

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### **President Monson**

This magnificent choir has just rendered the beautiful number "O My Father."

As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they've provided this morning.

It will now be our pleasure to listen to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Following his remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "High on the Mountain Top." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard H. Winkel of the Seventy. The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, my heart reaches out to you wherever you may be this Sabbath morning. I feel a kinship with all of you who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I love this work and marvel at its strength and growth, for the manner in which it touches the lives of people throughout the world. I feel extremely humble in speaking to you. I have pleaded with the Lord to direct my thoughts and words.

### An Uruguayan sister's conversion story

We have just returned from a long journey from Salt Lake City to Montevideo, Uruguay, to dedicate a temple, the 103rd working temple of the Church. It was a time of great rejoicing for our members there. Thousands gathered in that beautiful and sacred building and in surrounding chapels.

One of the speakers, a woman, told a story, the likes of which you have heard many times. As I remember it, she recounted a time in their lives when the missionaries knocked on their door. She had not the remotest idea of what they were teaching. However, she invited them in, and she and her husband listened to their message.

It was, for them, an unbelievable story. They told of a boy who lived in the state of New York. He was 14 years of age when he read in the book of James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Desiring wisdom, because various creeds each claimed to have the truth, young Joseph determined to go into the woods and pray to the Lord.

This he did, and he experienced a vision in response to his prayer. God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the Resurrected Lord, appeared before

him and spoke with him. Other manifestations followed. Among these was securing from a hill near his home golden plates which he translated by the gift and power of God. Heavenly messengers appeared to him, bestowing upon him keys of the priesthood and the authority to speak in the name of God.

How could anyone believe such a story? It seemed preposterous. And yet these people believed as they were instructed. Faith came into their hearts to accept that which they had been taught. It was a miracle. It was a gift from God. They could not believe it, and yet they did.

Following their baptism, their knowledge of the Church grew. They learned more of temple marriage, of families united for eternity under the authority of the holy priesthood. They were determined to have this blessing. But there was no temple anywhere near them. They scrimped and saved. When they had enough, they traveled all the way from Uruguay to Utah with their children, here to be sealed together as a family in the bonds of eternal marriage. She is today an assistant to the matron in the new Montevideo Uruguay Temple. Her husband is a counselor in the temple presidency.

### Faith motivates conversion

I am not surprised that comparatively few people join the Church from among the large number on whom the missionaries call. There's no faith. On the other hand, I am amazed that so many do. It is a marvelous and wonderful thing that thousands are touched by the miracle of the Holy Spirit, that they believe and accept and become members. They are baptized. Their lives are forever touched for good. Miracles occur. A seed of faith comes into their hearts. It enlarges as they

learn. And they accept principle upon principle until they have every one of the marvelous blessings that come to those who walk with faith in this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It is faith that is the converter. It is faith that is the teacher. Thus it has been from the beginning.

I marvel at the quality of the men and women who accepted Joseph Smith's testimony and came into the Church. They included such men as Brigham Young, the Pratt brothers, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, the wives of these men, and a host of others. They were people of substance. Many of them were well educated. They were blessed of the Lord with the faith to accept the story which they heard. When they received the message, when the gift of faith touched their lives, they were baptized. The brethren gladly gave up what they had been doing and, with the support of their families, responded to calls to go across the sea to teach that which they had accepted on faith.

I read again the other day Parley P. Pratt's account of his reading the Book of Mormon and coming into the Church. Said he:

"I opened it with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

"As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he exists" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [1985], 20).

The gift of faith touched his life. He could not do enough to repay the Lord for what had come to him. He spent the remainder of his days in missionary ser-

vice. He died a martyr to this great work and kingdom.

### **New temples testify of pioneer faith**

Beautiful new temples are now being constructed in Nauvoo, Illinois, and Winter Quarters, Nebraska. They will stand as testimonies to the faith and faithfulness of the thousands of Latter-day Saints who built and later forsook Nauvoo, to move with great suffering across what is now the state of Iowa to their temporary abode in Council Bluffs and in Winter Quarters, just north of Omaha.

The Winter Quarters Temple property adjoins the burial ground of many who gave their lives for this cause which they regarded as more precious than life itself. Their journey to the valley of the Great Salt Lake is an epic without parallel. The suffering they endured, the sacrifices they made became the cost of what they believed.

I have in my office a small statue of my own pioneer grandfather burying beside the trail his wife and her brother who died on the same day. He then picked up his infant child and carried her to this valley.

Faith? There can be no doubt about it. When doubts arose, when tragedies struck, the quiet voice of faith was heard in the stillness of the night as certain and reassuring as was the place of the polar star in the heavens above.

It was this mysterious and wonderful manifestation of faith that brought reassurance, that spoke with certainty, that came as a gift from God concerning this great latter-day work. Countless, literally countless, are the stories of its expression in the pioneer period of the Church. But it does not stop there.

### **Gift of faith motivates us still today**

As it was then, so it is today. This precious and marvelous gift of faith, this gift from God our Eternal Father is still

the strength of this work and the quiet vibrancy of its message. Faith underlies it all. Faith is the substance of it all. Whether it be going into the mission field, living the Word of Wisdom, or paying one's tithing, it is all the same. It is the faith within us that is evidenced in all we do.

Our critics cannot understand it. Because they do not understand, they attack. A quiet inquiry, an anxious desire to grasp the principle behind the result could bring greater understanding and appreciation.

I was asked at a news conference on one occasion how we get men to leave their vocations, to leave home, and serve the Church. I responded that we simply ask them, and we know what their answer will be.

What a marvelous and wonderful thing it is, this powerful conviction that the Church is true. It is God's holy work. He overrules in the things of His kingdom and in the lives of His sons and daughters. This is the reason for the growth of the Church. The strength of this cause and kingdom is not found in its temporal assets, impressive as they may be. It is found in the hearts of its people. That is why it is successful. That is why it is strong and growing. That is why it is able to accomplish the wonderful things that it does. It all comes of the gift of faith, bestowed by the Almighty upon His children who doubt not and fear not, but go forward.

### **Faith motivates missionaries**

I sat in a meeting in Aruba the other evening. I dare say that most of those who hear me do not know where Aruba is or that there is even such a place. It is an island off the coast of Venezuela. It is a protectorate of the Netherlands. It is an inconspicuous place in this vast world. There were about 180 in the meeting. On the front row were eight missionaries: six elders and two sisters. The congregation consisted of men and women, boys

and girls of various racial strains. A little English was spoken, much of Spanish, and some expressions of other languages.

As I looked into the faces of that congregation, I thought of the faith there represented. They love this Church. They appreciate all that it does. They stand and testify of the reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Resurrected Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. They testify of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the Book of Mormon. They serve where they are called to serve. They are men and women of faith who have embraced the true and living gospel of the Master, and in their midst are these eight missionaries. I am sure that it is a lonely place for them. But they are doing what they have been asked to do because of their faith. The two young women are beautiful and happy. As I looked at them, I said to myself, "Eighteen months is a long time to be in this faraway place." But they do not complain. They speak of the great experience they are having and of the wonderful people they meet. Shining through all of their service is the reassuring faith that the work in which they are engaged is true and that the service they are giving is given unto God.

It is so with our missionaries wherever they might serve, whether it be here in Salt Lake City or in Mongolia. They go and serve with faith in their hearts. It is a phenomenon of great power that quietly whispers, "This cause is true, and to you there is an obligation to serve it regardless of the cost."

Again, people cannot understand it, these thousands of bright and able young men and women who forgo social life, leave school, and selflessly go wherever they are sent to teach the gospel. They go by the power of faith, and they teach by the power of faith, planting a seed of faith here and another there which grow and mature into converts of strength and capacity.

Faith is the basis of testimony. Faith underlies loyalty to the Church. Faith represents sacrifice, gladly given in moving forward the work of the Lord.

### **Father, help us to be faithful**

The Lord has commanded us to take upon ourselves “the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (D&C 27:17).

In the spirit of faith of which I have spoken, I testify that this is the work of the Lord, that this is His kingdom, re-

stored to the earth in our time to bless the sons and daughters of God of all generations.

O Father, help us to be faithful unto Thee and unto our glorious Redeemer, to serve Thee in truth, to make that service an expression of our love, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “High on the Mountain Top.”

Elder Richard H. Winkel offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

The fifth session of the 171st Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 1, 2001. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 171st Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Arise, O God, and Shine.” Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Arise, O God, and Shine.”

Elder Adhemar Damiani offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

Thank you, Brother Damiani.

The choir will now sing “The Lord Is My Shepherd.” Following the singing, it will be our pleasure to hear from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

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## Elder David B. Haight

### Gratitude for parents' temple marriage

My dear brethren and sisters, I have prayed for the blessings of heaven to be with me in these few moments that I occupy the pulpit here this afternoon. I want to say a few words about gratitude and thanksgiving to people who have influenced my life.

Imagine in your mind May 1, 1890. A young man and a young lady in a little country town about 250 miles from the Logan Temple decided to be married. Highways—none. Fancy roads—none. Trails through the sagebrush and wagon trails—yes.

It probably would have taken six or seven days at least to make the journey. In May it rains in southern Idaho and in Utah. Imagine riding in a buggy with all of your clothes—taking something along, I guess, for the horses; taking some food in little sacks of some kind. Fancy clothes, warm clothes—they had none. Sleeping bags—none. Coleman lanterns or cooking stoves—none. They would have had matches and had to find dry sagebrush to make a fire to cook their food.

Just imagine, just run it through your mind for a moment and think of the gratitude that I have and of the blessings they brought into my life by traveling to a place to be married a long ways away. Inconvenience? That wouldn't be a problem; they would do it. And think of what's happened in the last few years with President Hinckley—the inspiration and direction he has had in the building of temples all over the world. And think of what people went through a few years ago.

Those blessings have come into my life from my parents and their parents and others who have affected my life—teachers and good people I have been associated with.

### A performance on an out-of-tune violin

When I was about 11 years old, a man came to our little town to teach at the Church academy. He played the violin a little, and we hadn't had anyone there for a long time who had played the violin. My mother was impressed and picked up a little violin, I guess at some little rummage sale somewhere, and decided that I should learn to play the violin.

Even though I had never seen anyone play the violin in public, he came to our house and started giving me some little simple lessons on playing the violin. I was coming along fairly well by the time we graduated from the eighth grade in grammar school, and for the graduation exercises held in the high school I was asked to play a violin solo.

I'd carefully practiced the little song "Träumerei," as I remember the name. My sister who was four years older than I and was then one of the popular girls in high school was my pianist. At the graduation exercises, Connie McMurray was the valedictorian. Girls are always smarter in school than boys. As she was giving the valedictory address, there was a little pedestal with a pitcher of water and a glass on it for the school board. The school board was on the stand, plus a little handful of us who were graduating from the eighth grade.

As Connie McMurray was giving her famous valedictory address, near the end of it we noticed the little doily under the pitcher of water on the pedestal was moving over a little bit toward the edge, and over it fell with the pitcher and glass of water! Connie McMurray fell in a dead faint.

In the scurrying around of cleaning the water off the stage and rearranging the chairs, they announced that we would

now have a violin solo from David Haight. I walked over to the little old piano, and my sister came up from the audience. I took that simple violin out of the wooden case as my sister sat down at the piano and sounded an A. I said, "Go ahead and play."

She said, "David, you'd better tune it."

I said, "No, no, I tuned it at our piano at home." We had an old Kimball piano at home. You know, homes in those days—if you had a piano and books, that's all you needed for the family. I had carefully tuned the strings by twisting those ebony pegs of that violin, but I didn't know that all pianos weren't the same. So as my sister said, "You'd better tune it," I said, "No, no, it's all tuned. I tuned it at home."

So she went ahead and played the introduction, and then I came down on the first note. We were off about two notes.

As she slowed down, I said, "Keep playing," because I couldn't imagine anyone would take the time of a famous audience like I was playing to—you know, 100 people in that little high school auditorium. You wouldn't hold up Carnegie Hall while you tuned your violin! That would be shop work. You would do that in the back room so that when you would start to play, why, you'd be all ready to play.

She slowed down. I said, "Keep playing." We finished it, and she didn't speak to me for days following that show.

### **Gratitude for family**

I want to honor the little country town that I grew up in with my parents, where I was raised and where they were kind and good to me. I am thankful for the knowledge that I acquired from my loving parents.

I am grateful for my wife, Ruby, coming into my life, for our children, and then their children, and then their children, and the people who are part of my life today who influence my life. And I

hope that I have some influence for good in their lives.

### **Gratitude for a witness of the Savior**

You remember the account of John the Baptist speaking to John the Beloved and to Andrew on the occasion when the Savior met them. And John the Baptist commented, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). And as the Savior met those young men—John the Baptist, John the Beloved, and Andrew—He said, "What seek ye?"

And in that conversation that's reported, they said, "Where dwellest thou?" (John 1:38).

And the Savior said, "Come and see" (John 1:39).

They followed the Savior, and according to the brief account that we have, they stayed with Him. They may have spent the evening together, but it is not known where He was staying or what accommodations He had.

John and Andrew were with the Savior for several hours. Just imagine being in His presence or being able to sit and look into His eyes or to hear Him explain who He was and why He had come to earth and to hear that inflection in His voice in describing what He would have told those young men. They would have shaken His hand. They would have felt of that precious, wonderful personality as they listened to Him.

And following that encounter, the account says that Andrew went to find his brother Simon because he had to share it with someone. As we meet in a great conference like this and talk about the gospel and talk about our responsibility and the opportunity we have, just imagine if that had happened to any of us, to have been in that divine, precious personality's presence and to have listened to Him and to have shaken His hand and to have looked into His eyes and to have heard what He would say.



When Andrew found his brother Simon, he said to him, "We have found the [Messiah]" (John 1:41). He probably said, "We've been in His presence. We've felt of His personality. We know that what He is telling us is true." Yes, Andrew had to share it with someone.

That is what we do in sharing what we know and what we understand. And I'm grateful for that knowledge I have that God lives, that He is our Father, and for the understanding that I have of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, Jesus the Christ, our Savior and the Redeemer of all of mankind.

### **A Scottish man's gratitude for the gospel**

I had a letter only a few days ago from a man in Edinburgh, Scotland. His name is George Stewart. He'll be surprised at my mentioning this, but he wanted to thank me because when he was 15 years old (some 40 years ago), I was presiding over the mission in Scotland. He wanted to thank me for the missionaries' coming to their home in Thornliebank, one of the areas of Glasgow. He had joined the Church along with his mother.

He said that as he developed a testimony of the Book of Mormon, as he started reading it and kept reading it, he couldn't put it down because he knew it was true. He kept reading and reading and developing a testimony of the gospel as a young man. He told how he used to come over to the mission home and how we were kind to him and would spend time with the young people because they were getting into Mutual, which we were starting in the branches.

Then he told of the blessings that came into his life as a young man, that he had met his sweetheart in that branch—his wife—and that they were married and that they had four children: a son who had finished a mission in the Washington D.C. Mission, a son who served in the England Leeds Mission, a daughter who was married in the temple, and one

who is waiting for the return of a missionary. He expressed gratitude for all of the blessings that had come into his life and the lives of his sons who have been on missions and his daughters.

During the past 40 years he has served as a bishop four times in four different units, and his wife has served as a Relief Society president on three occasions. He is currently serving as a counselor in the Edinburgh stake presidency. He said, "And I'm going to be retiring very shortly from the company I'm with. I've done very well, and we plan to go out on a mission together."

Then he said these words to me: "This amazing Church has woven a pattern of miracles in our lives." Let me say that again: "This amazing Church has woven a pattern of miracles in our lives."

And he says the gospel came into his life, to his wife, to all of his children, and to their children. The grandchildren are active in the Church, and he and his wife now have a great desire to go out into the world when they retire from their profession.

When you think of the majesty and the impact and the spiritual direction of this work out in the world and that this work is meant to reach the people of the world, it is thrilling just to contemplate what lies before us.

### **The word *retirement* is not in the Bible**

There was a Brother and Sister Andrus from Walnut Creek, California, who had served four missions, and then they were called to go to Zimbabwe and assigned to the district in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. This was their fifth mission.

As they told of the marvelous things that they were able to do in reactivating people, she told a story of how there was a little portable electronic organ in the chapel and how she started showing some of the boys and girls in Bulawayo how to play the organ. There was also a little piano keyboard in another room, and she

would have a class where the organ was and another one where this little keyboard was. She would teach these children to play the organ after school. They said they started a temple preparation class in the reactivation process, and before they left they were able to put 28 people on the bus to go from Bulawayo all the way to Johannesburg to the temple, 650 miles away—two days and one night. They said, “We’ve talked about how we are in our late 70s now—these two old people wandering around in Africa having the greatest period of our lives, the greatest excitement we could have.”

Think of Dr. Alan Barker, who had retired from the Salt Lake Clinic, a wonderful cardiologist here in Salt Lake. He and his wife accepted a mission call to the Philippines. While there, they accomplished a marvelous work in helping correct a serious disease problem. He was there long enough to help find a solution to the problem and obtain the needed medical equipment and medication.

These are examples of the marvelous service being given by senior missionary couples in various parts of the world.

I leave you my love, my witness, my testimony that God lives, that this work is true. You can’t find the word *retirement* in the Bible. I don’t think you can find the word in the Bible Dictionary. Isn’t it interesting to think what can happen in our lives today and what possibilities lie ahead for us if we believe and understand and have a commitment and a dedication to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to bless the lives of people?

May you be so blessed. May you have a burning feeling in your heart. May you feel as I do on this day that this work is true and that it is meant for us to help bring about God’s eternal plan of salvation and exaltation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We’ve just heard from Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who is a marvelous work and a wonder.

We shall now hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### The Church is centered on love

My beloved brethren and sisters, I feel as you do that Elder David B. Haight is an inspiration to the entire Church and so many others.

Two thousand years ago, upon the sand and stones of Galilee, walked a man that few recognized for who He truly was: the Creator of worlds, the Redeemer, the Son of God.

A lawyer approached Him and asked, “Which is the great[est] commandment?” Jesus answered:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”<sup>1</sup>

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord has established His Church once again among men. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, restored to the earth in these latter days, is centered on those commandments the Savior proclaimed as the greatest: to love our Heavenly Father and to love our fellowmen. Our Savior said, “If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments.”<sup>2</sup>

## Manifest love by living the law of the fast

One way we show our love is through observance of the law of the fast. This law is based upon a primary yet profound principle—a simple practice that, if observed with the proper spirit, will help us draw closer to our Heavenly Father and strengthen our faith, while at the same time help us ease the burdens of others.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members are encouraged to fast whenever their faith needs special fortification and to fast regularly once each month on fast day. On that day we go without eating or drinking for two consecutive meals, commune with our Heavenly Father, and contribute a fast offering to help the poor. The offering should be at least equal to the value of the food that would have been eaten.

Typically the first Sunday of each month is designated as fast Sunday. On that day members who are physically able are encouraged to fast, pray, bear witness to the truthfulness of the gospel, and pay a generous fast offering. “The law of the fast,” taught Elder Milton R. Hunter, “is probably as old as the human family. . . . In ancient times, prophet-leaders repeatedly gave to church members the commandment to observe the law of fasting and praying.”<sup>3</sup>

## Prayer adds power to fasting

We observe that in the scriptures, fasting almost always is linked with prayer. Without prayer, fasting is not complete fasting; it’s simply going hungry. If we want our fasting to be more than just going without eating, we must lift our hearts, our minds, and our voices in communion with our Heavenly Father. Fasting, coupled with mighty prayer, is powerful. It can fill our minds with the revelations of the Spirit. It can strengthen us against times of temptation.

Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. They

can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. Testimonies grow. We mature spiritually and emotionally and sanctify our souls. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions.

Fasting and prayer can help us in our families and our daily work. They can help us magnify our callings in the Church. President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

“If you want to get the spirit of your office and calling as a new president of a quorum, a new high [councilor], a new bishop [or, I might say, a Relief Society president]—try fasting for a period. I don’t mean just missing one meal, then eating twice as much the next meal. I mean really fasting, and praying during that period. It will do more to give you the real spirit of your office and calling and permit the Spirit to operate through you than anything I know.”<sup>4</sup>

The Quorum of the Twelve, in a letter to the Church dated May 17, 1845, stated: “Let this be an [example] to all saints, and there will never be any lack for bread: When the poor are starving, let those who have, fast one day and give what they otherwise would have eaten to the bishops for the poor, and every one will abound for a long time. . . . And so long as the saints will all live to this principle with glad hearts and cheerful countenances they will always have an abundance.”<sup>5</sup>

Book of Mormon prophets taught the law of the fast: “Behold, now it came to pass that the people of Nephi were exceedingly rejoiced, because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto the Lord their God; yea, and they did fast much and pray much, and they did worship God with exceedingly great joy.”<sup>6</sup>

The powerful combination of fasting and prayer is exemplified by the four sons of Mosiah. They faced overwhelming odds, yet worked miracles in bringing

thousands of the Lamanites to a knowledge of the truth. They shared the secret of their success. They “searched the scriptures,” and “they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting.” What was the result? “They had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Help the poor by living the law of the fast**

When we fast, brethren and sisters, we feel hunger. For a short time we literally put ourselves in the position of the hungry and the needy. As we do so, we have greater understanding of the deprivations they might feel. When we give to the bishop an offering to relieve the suffering of others, we not only do something sublime for others, but we do something wonderful for ourselves as well. King Benjamin taught that as we give of our substance to the poor, we retain “a remission of [our] sins from day to day.”<sup>8</sup>

Another Book of Mormon prophet, Amulek, explained that often our prayers have no power because we have turned our backs on the needy.<sup>9</sup> If you feel that Heavenly Father is not listening to your petitions, ask yourself if you are listening to the cries of the poor, the sick, the hungry, and the afflicted all around you.

Some look at the overwhelming need in the world and think, “What can I do that could possibly make a difference?”

I will tell you plainly one thing you can do. You can live the law of the fast and contribute a generous fast offering.

Fast offerings are used for one purpose only: to bless the lives of those in need. Every dollar given to the bishop as a fast offering goes to assist the poor. When donations exceed local needs, they are passed along to fulfill the needs elsewhere.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have traveled the world testifying of Him. I come before you today to bear another witness—a witness to the suffer-

ing and need of millions of our Heavenly Father’s children. Far too many in the world today—thousands upon thousands of families—experience want each day. They hunger. They ache with cold. They suffer from sickness. They grieve for their children. They mourn for the safety of their families.

These people are not strangers and foreigners but children of our Heavenly Father. They are our brothers and our sisters. They are “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”<sup>10</sup> Their fervent prayers ascend to heaven pleading for respite, for relief from suffering. At this very hour on this very day, some members even in our Church are praying for the miracle that would allow them to surmount the suffering that surrounds them. If, while we have the means to do so, we do not have compassion for them and spring to their aid, we are in danger of being among those the prophet Moroni spoke of when he said, “Behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Bring a needy family a wagon of hope**

How well I remember my father, the bishop of our ward, filling my small red wagon with food and clothing and then directing me—as a deacon in the Church—to pull the wagon behind me and visit the homes of the needy in our ward.

Often, when fast-offering funds were depleted, my father would take money from his own pocket to supply the needy in his flock with food that would keep them from going hungry. Those were the days of the Great Depression, and many families were suffering.

I remember visiting one family in particular: a sickly mother, an unemployed and discouraged father, and five children with pallid faces, all disheartened and hungry. I remember the gratitude that beamed in their faces when I walked up to

their door with my wagon nearly spilling over with needed supplies. I remember how the children smiled. I remember how the mother wept. And I remember how the father stood, head bowed, unable to speak.

These impressions and many others forged within me a love for the poor; a love for my father, who served as a shepherd to his flock; and a love for the faithful and generous members of the Church who sacrificed so much to help relieve the suffering of others.

Brothers and sisters, in a sense you too can bring to a needy family a wagon brimming with hope. How? By paying a generous fast offering.

### **Teach children the law of the fast**

Parents, teach your children the joys of a proper fast. And how do you do that? The same as with any gospel principle—let them see you live it by your example. Then help them live the law of the fast themselves, little by little. They can fast and they can also pay a fast offering if they choose. As we teach our children to fast, it can give them the power to resist temptations along their life's journey.

### **Give generous fast offerings**

How much should we pay in fast offerings? My brothers and sisters, the measure of our offering to bless the poor is a measure of our gratitude to our Heavenly Father. Will we, who have been blessed so abundantly, turn our backs on those who need our help? Paying a generous fast offering is a measure of our willingness to consecrate ourselves to relieve the suffering of others.

Brother Marion G. Romney, who was the bishop of our ward when I was called on a mission and who later served as a member of the First Presidency of the Church, admonished:

“Be liberal in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. Don't give just for

the benefit of the poor, but give for your own welfare. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating of your means and your time.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Collecting fast offerings**

The deacons in the Church have a sacred obligation to visit the home of every member to collect fast offerings for the poor. President Thomas S. Monson once related to me how he, as a young bishop, began to sense that the young deacons in his ward were complaining about having to get up so early to collect fast offerings. Instead of calling the young men to task, this wise bishop took them to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City.

There the boys met a disabled woman operating the switchboard. They saw a blind man placing labels on cans, and an elderly brother stocking shelves. As a result of what they saw, President Monson said, a penetrating silence came over the boys as they witnessed the end result of their efforts to collect the sacred funds that aided the needy and provided employment for those who otherwise would be idle.<sup>13</sup>

### **Blessings of living the law of the fast**

As members of the Church, we have a sacred responsibility to assist those in need and to help relieve their heavy burdens. Observance of the law of the fast can help all people of all nations. President Gordon B. Hinckley asked:

“What would happen if the principles of fast day and the fast offering were observed throughout the world[?] The hungry would be fed, the naked clothed, the homeless sheltered. . . . A new measure of concern and unselfishness would grow in the hearts of people everywhere.”<sup>14</sup>

Fasting in the proper spirit and in the Lord's way will energize us spiritually. It will strengthen our self-discipline, fill our homes with peace, lighten our hearts with

joy, fortify us against temptation, prepare us for times of adversity, and open the windows of heaven.

Listen to the rich blessings prophesied for those who live the law of the fast:

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."<sup>15</sup>

As we live the law of the fast, we not only draw nearer to God through prayer, but we feed the hungry and care for the poor. Each time we do so, we fulfill both of the great commandments upon which "hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>16</sup>

I know that Jesus the Christ lives. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet, seer, and revelator. And I bear solemn witness of this reality. I also bear witness that He who had compassion for the "least of these"<sup>17</sup> looks with love and compassion upon those today who "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>18</sup>

I raise my voice in testimony and promise, along with the great Apostles who have preceded us, that those who live the law of the fast will surely discover the rich blessings that attend this holy principle. Of this I bear solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 22:36-40.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 42:29.
3. "Will a Man Rob God?" (1952), 207-8.
4. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 331-32.
5. *History of the Church*, 7:413.
6. Alma 45:1.
7. Alma 17:2-3.
8. Mosiah 4:26.
9. See Alma 34:28.
10. Ephesians 2:19.
11. Mormon 8:37.
12. "The Blessings of the Fast," *Ensign*, July 1982, 4.
13. See Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 8.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 52-53.
15. Isaiah 58: 9, 11.
16. Matthew 22:40.
17. Matthew 25:40.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

## Elder John K. Carmack

### Love and testimony unify the Church

Seventeen years ago today, during the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, I responded to President Hinckley's assignment that I represent the six newly called Seventy in accepting our calls. As I awaited my turn at the midpoint of the session, I stood between two great Apostles: Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Bruce R. McConkie. I felt their love and support as I gazed with no little trepidation at the congregation of Saints gathered in the Tabernacle. Incidentally, we're four times greater today.

Elder Ashton, sensing my feelings, whispered, "I know it's an awesome sight, but they're all your friends." As I stood that first time to speak, I felt the love of the Saints washing over me. Since then, in all the places to which worldwide assignments have taken us, Shirley and I have felt that same love and tried to return it.

The unity of the Saints is unique and powerful. I have seen and felt it on virtually every continent and in the islands of the sea. That unity is a major reason the Church is progressing. Without it we would falter. As Jesus explained, "Every

city or house divided against itself shall not stand."<sup>1</sup>

Division and fault lines abound in the world, but "we are not divided; all one body we."<sup>2</sup> We have that unity under the spiritual direction of our prophet. Our wealth, social status, or skin color doesn't matter. The feast of the gospel is freely available to all who desire to partake of its delicacies. Jesus told His disciples, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>3</sup> The Church is quietly moving forward in crescendo, as a great symphony orchestra moving toward a climax, strengthening communities as it grows.

We enjoy that unity through love. We can neither purchase nor force it. Our method is to "persuade, . . . and bless with wisdom, love, and light, . . . but never force the human mind."<sup>4</sup> To the extent we operate in other ways, we diminish our right to be recognized as disciples of Christ. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>5</sup>

That unifying love is coupled with our individual testimonies. Almost all members could and would respond if called upon to bear their own testimonies in this conference. Yes, we are united in love and testimony.

### Testimony of the Book of Mormon

My testimony is built on the firm convictions that the Book of Mormon is true and that Jesus is our Savior. This spiritual foundation has helped me weather the storms of challenge and doubt. I started reading the Book of Mormon in my youth and have continued, learning and drinking its spirit with every study.

As one in the last large group of missionaries called before demands of the Korean War diverted our young men into military service, I participated in about five days of training in the Salt Lake Mission Home on State Street. One of our trainers was Bryant S. Hinckley, a leader

of stature and a stimulating teacher. He invited those missionaries assembled to share reasons they believed the Book of Mormon to be true. I was impressed with the variety of reasons shared by the missionaries. On that occasion I suggested that in addition to the witness of the Holy Ghost, the number of new names identifying people, places, animals, and things in the Book of Mormon had impressed me.

Now, 50 years later, I am still impressed by these new names. When researchers reported the discovery of stones in the southern Arabian Desert with the name *Nahom* inscribed on them, I paid attention. These inscriptions appear to be dated about 700 B.C. Ishmael, we read, was buried in a place called Nahom. Nahom is one of those names that impressed me.

Evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon continues to mount. During his mission in Germany, Jack Welch found verses in the Book of Mosiah that clearly form a chiasmus, or an X-shaped configuration. That finding evidenced ancient rather than modern authorship.

Scholars continue to find and publish new insights into what the book says and how it says it. A distinguished literature professor has published a recent book containing his lifetime study of the Book of Mormon, detailing its astonishing variety of literary forms.<sup>6</sup> Statisticians have found evidence of multiple authors within the covers of the book. Although these evidences have added to my testimony, the original powerful witness of the Holy Ghost has remained unshaken and unaltered. It has also recurred many times.

### Value of Book of Mormon witnesses

I also wonder if we fully appreciate the value and strength of the witnesses' testimonies published in each copy of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris saw

the plates and the angel. And Joseph also showed the gold plates to eight other men who saw and, using their words, “hefted” them.<sup>7</sup> These witnesses did not recant their testimonies, nor have their published testimonies ever been otherwise impeached. Those eight additional witnesses, in effect, testified, “Yes, we saw and lifted those plates. Joseph had them.”

The witnesses have been important to me. The Lord told Joseph that the declarations of these witnesses prove “to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old.”<sup>8</sup>

### Testimony of Christ is the main message

Having discovered that the book is true, we must ask, “What is its message?” Alma (and incidentally, Professor Welch says that they’ve discovered recently ancient usage of the word *Alma*), in speaking to the people of Gideon, put his finger on the central message of the book. He said, “There be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.”<sup>9</sup> Yes, Jesus’ coming and His Atonement, worked out in Gethsemane and on the cross, are surely more important than all other knowledge a person can gain. And the Book of Mormon is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” as its subtitle proclaims.

Before reading the Book of Mormon, I had a child’s testimony of Jesus. My first awareness of Jesus was when my Grandmother Carmack, an artist of some minor acclaim, pointed out to me the beauty of the Arizona sunset and then asked, “John Kay, who made this beautiful world?” Answering her own question, she explained, “Jesus made this world. Yes, He did.” Grandmother was right, of course. Jesus, the Son of God, did create the worlds under the Father’s direction.<sup>10</sup> Incidentally,

grandparents should not underestimate their influence in the lives of their grandchildren.

### Jesus helps us personally in times of need

Christ’s Atonement is the central doctrine, but of even more comfort and benefit has been how wonderfully accessible and individual His mercy and help have been to me personally. These familiar words capture my feelings about that important aspect of Jesus’ influence and ministry:

In ev’ry condition—in sickness, in health,  
In poverty’s vale or abounding in wealth,  
At home or abroad, on the land or the sea—  
As thy days may demand, . . . so thy succor shall be.<sup>11</sup>

During those chaotic moments we all seem to experience—when suffering anxiety or despair, when misunderstood and depreciated—as our days demand, our Savior can and will provide that succor or help in time of need. His succor brings us peace. Did He not say, “In the world ye shall have tribulation,” but “in me ye might have peace”?<sup>12</sup> Oh, how I have needed that peace! And it has been available in every condition, as my days and circumstances may have demanded.

To conclude, Church members are unified in Christ through love and testimony. This dispensation’s pathway to our Savior is through Joseph and the Book of Mormon.<sup>13</sup> Thus we can be certain that the New Testament account of Jesus is true. Jesus is our Lord and Redeemer. At every opportunity we ought to proclaim, “Hallelujah! How great Thou art!”

President Hinckley is His prophet on the earth. This is His Church. May our unity constitute evidence to the world that we are His disciples. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## NOTES

1. Matthew 12:25.
2. "Onward, Christian Soldiers," *Hymns*, no. 246.
3. Matthew 8:11.
4. "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.
5. John 13:35.
6. See Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (1997).
7. "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:11.
9. Alma 7:7.
10. See Hebrews 1:1-2.
11. "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85.

12. John 16:33.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 5:10.

**President Monson**

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and then Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

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## Elder L. Lionel Kendrick

**Enhancing our temple experience**

One of the great blessings that we enjoy today is the opportunity to attend the temple. With an ever increasing number of temples, the blessings of the temple are available to a growing number of Church members.

These blessings should not be taken lightly. The Savior has commanded that we should "trifle not with sacred things" (D&C 6:12). The temple and the holy ordinances are indeed sacred, and we should be spiritually sensitive to them. It is a sacred blessing to attend the temple to worship the Lord.

There is a difference in just attending the temple and having a rich spiritual experience. The real blessings of the temple come as we enhance our temple experience. To do so, we must feel a spirit of reverence for the temple and a spirit of worship.

**The spirit of reverence in the temple**

All who attend the temple should remember the counsel of the Lord when

He said, "Reverence my sanctuary" (Leviticus 19:30). Reverence is an expression of deep respect, honor, and adoration for the Lord. It is having reverence for His name, for His words, for His ordinances and covenants, for His servants, for His chapels, and for His temples.

It is an outward indication of an inner feeling that we have for Him. We should always remember that it is by His invitation that we come to His holy house, the temple of the Lord. We should respond to His invitation by being worthy, by being prepared, and by having the temple as a priority in our lives. While in the temple, we should act as if we are in His holy presence.

To be reverent is not just to be quiet. It involves an awareness of what is taking place. It involves a divine desire to learn and to be receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. It involves a striving to seek added light and knowledge. Irreverence is not only an act of disrespect for Deity, but it makes it impossible for the Spirit to teach us the things that we need to know.

It is in the temple that we must speak in reverent tones. Reverence is no minor or mundane matter. It has eternal consequences and should be treated as divine in nature. To be reverent in the temple, we must sense it to be a place of purity and a place of holiness.

### *A place of purity*

The temple is a place of purity. It is of the utmost importance that we keep the temple pure and holy. The Savior promised:

"And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, . . . my glory shall rest upon it;

"Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it" (D&C 97:15–16).

Those who enter the temple should prepare both their hearts and their minds. They should be able to answer in the affirmative the questions asked by Alma when he said:

"Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?" (Alma 5:19).

When we are reverent in the temple, we help keep it pure and holy, free from distractions and offenses to the Spirit. We must remember to say or do nothing that would be offensive to the Lord. President David O. McKay counseled:

"When you enter a church building, you are coming into the presence of our Father in heaven; and that thought should be sufficient incentive for you to prepare your hearts, your minds, and even your attire, that you might appropriately and properly sit in his presence" (*Improvement Era*, July 1962, 509).

Reverence involves thinking, speaking, feeling, and acting as we would in the presence of the Lord.

### *A place of holiness*

The temple is a place of holiness. It is the most sacred and holy place on earth and should be treated with the greatest degree of reverence and respect. Reverence in the temple is an expression to the Lord that we consider it to be sacred and that we recognize it to be, indeed, His holy house.

### **The spirit of worship in the temple**

The temple is a place of worship. Reverence is a supernal form of worship. It is the form of worship that is found in the celestial kingdom. In the vision of the degrees of glory given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, this celestial worship was described with these words:

"And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, . . . where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever;

"Before whose throne all things bow in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever" (D&C 76:92–93).

Our worship in the temple is in preparation for living in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son. We should worship Them in a spirit of humility and in a spirit of reverence.

True worship of the Lord in His holy house means that we should enhance our temple experience. We can obtain a rich spiritual experience in the temple by doing the following:

First, we must leave the world behind as we enter the temple.

Second, we must seek to gain added light and knowledge.

### *Leave the world behind*

When we enter the temple, we should leave the world behind. We should feel what it would be like when we enter the presence of the Lord. We may consider what thoughts we would think and what communications we would have in His

holy presence. If we can catch the vision of this eventual event, it will help us in preparing to enter His presence and in leaving the world behind as we enter His temple.

1. *Thoughts.* As we enter the temple grounds, we should leave our worldly thoughts behind and focus on the sacred responsibilities that are ours as we serve in the house of the Lord.

Our thoughts should be spiritual in nature. We must remember that the Lord is aware of our thoughts. He spoke to Ezekiel and said, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezekiel 11:5).

2. *Communications.* The Savior has given us great counsel concerning our communications in the temple. He said, "Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, . . . from all your pride and light-mindedness" (D&C 88:121).

Just as we leave our worldly thoughts behind as we enter the temple grounds, we should also leave our worldly discussions behind. It is inappropriate to discuss matters of business, pleasure, or current events in the temple.

It is important not only what we speak in the temple, but also the manner in which we speak. We must always speak in soft and subdued tones in all places in the temple. This should be our temple voice.

There should be silence in the sacred ordinance areas of the temple, except for the necessary communications concerning the performance of the ordinances. These ordinance areas are sacred and should not be used for any worldly conversations.

The Savior has given us loving counsel that will assist us in enhancing our temple experience by leaving the world behind: "And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better" (D&C 25:10).

Perhaps the chastening words of the Savior to David Whitmer may be appropriate for us to remember:

"Your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of me, your Maker, . . . and you have not given heed unto my Spirit. . . .

"Wherefore, you are left to inquire for yourself" (D&C 30:2-3).

*Seek to gain added light and knowledge*

Gaining added light and knowledge is not a passive process. It involves focusing on the things of the Spirit and seeking the spiritual lessons to be learned. The Savior counseled:

"And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things" (D&C 88:67).

The Spirit of the Holy Ghost is the teacher in the temple. He teaches principles of eternal significance. It is during these instructions that we see the relationship between the earthly and the eternal. We must remember that the Spirit teaches only those who are teachable. If we enter the temple seeking added light and knowledge, we can learn and understand something new during the temple experience. The Savior promised:

"That which is of God is light; and he that . . . continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24).

**Prepare to live in the Lord's presence**

May we enhance our temple experience with a spirit of reverence, treating it as a place of purity and a place of holiness. May we enhance our temple experience with a spirit of worship by leaving the world behind and seeking to obtain added light and knowledge. If we do these things, the Lord will bless us and we will become prepared to live in His holy presence. To this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Bruce D. Porter

### The most important class in Cambridge

Nearly 25 years ago our family lived in Massachusetts, where I was enrolled in graduate school. My program of study was very demanding, leaving me little free time. One Sunday in church the ward Primary president approached me and asked if I might substitute as a Primary teacher for two weeks. Primary was then held on a weekday afternoon, and I knew it would be difficult to find room in my schedule to teach the class. But after some hesitation, I agreed.

The appointed day came to teach Primary. That afternoon I was in the university library, absorbed in a book on international politics. The subject I was studying seemed somehow more important than the upcoming Primary class. Consequently, I procrastinated until just 30 minutes before the class was to begin to review the lesson I was to teach. Then I walked from the library down to our ward chapel on the edge of campus. My reluctant attitude must have slowed my steps, for I arrived a few minutes late. As I stepped to the door of the Primary room, the children were just beginning to sing the opening hymn. It was a song I had never heard before, a song whose melody and message touched me deeply:

As I have loved you,  
Love one another.  
This new commandment:  
Love one another.  
By this shall men know  
Ye are my disciples,  
If ye have love  
One to another.  
[“Love One Another,” *Hymns*,  
no. 308]

As I stood there, transfixed in the doorway, the Spirit bore witness that I was looking at the most important class taking place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that day.

Back at the university in dozens of classrooms and laboratories, dedicated scholars were pursuing answers to the world's problems. Yet valuable though such efforts may have been, the university did not and could not hold the ultimate answers to the problems of a troubled world. Here before me was the Lord's answer: the quiet building up of His kingdom on earth by the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What was taking place in Primary that day was a small part of a divinely revealed plan for the salvation of a fallen world.

### God's kingdom is built by simple means

In October 1831, the Lord, in reference to the Restoration, declared, “The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that kingdom whose destiny it is to fill the whole earth. In the miraculous wisdom of the Almighty, the building up of God's kingdom in the latter days will take place by means as plain and simple as what I witnessed in Primary that day.

We rejoice to hear of temples being reared in every quarter of the earth and of far-flung nations opening their doors to the gospel. Built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, the Lord's Church is being taken to the whole world by missionaries called to proclaim His word. Sometimes, perhaps, we may be inclined to see the building of the kingdom as something that takes place beyond the horizon, far away from our own branch or ward. In truth, the Church advances both by outward expansion and by inward refinement. “For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must

be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened" (D&C 82:14).

We do not have to be called to serve far from home, nor do we have to hold a prominent place in the Church or in the world to build up the Lord's kingdom. We build it in our own hearts as we cultivate the Spirit of God in our lives. We build it within our families by instilling faith in our children. And we build it through the organization of the Church as we magnify our callings and share the gospel with neighbors and friends.

As our missionaries labor in fields ready for harvest, others labor in fields at home to strengthen the kingdom in the ward and community where they reside. From its earliest days, the Lord's Church has been built up by ordinary people who magnified their callings in humility and devotion. It does not matter to what office we are called to serve, only that we act "in all diligence" (D&C 107:99). In the words of modern revelation:

"Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

### **The kingdom of God is built in the home**

President Joseph F. Smith observed once that "great causes are not won in a single generation" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 119). More than anywhere else, it is within the family, in the quiet sanctuary of the home that generations unite in building the kingdom of God. The rearing of children is a divine work. The First Presidency has called on the parents of the Church to hold family home evening and family prayer, to study the gospel in the home, and to spend time with children in wholesome activities. As fathers and mothers teach their children the eternal truths once taught to them, they pass on the torch of truth to yet another generation, and the kingdom waxes stronger. "We are watchers of a beacon whose light

must never die" ("For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35).

When I was growing up, my father often led our family in gospel discussions around the dinner table. Only with the perspective of years do I understand today the contribution those family hours made to my own testimony. I rejoice in the prophecy of Isaiah that the time will come when "upon every dwelling place of mount Zion" there shall be "a cloud . . . by day, and . . . a flaming fire by night" (Isaiah 4:5), when the Spirit of God will abide in the homes of His people continually.

### **"The kingdom of God is within you"**

The Lord's kingdom encompasses not only Church and family, but also the hearts and minds of His people. As the Savior taught during His mortal ministry, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). If we truly desire to contribute to this great latter-day work, our eyes will be single to the glory of God, our minds enlightened by "the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10), our hearts pure and consecrated. Personal prayer, study, and pondering are vital to building the kingdom within our own souls. It is in quiet moments of contemplation and communion with the Almighty that we come to know and love Him as our Father.

I bear witness that the kingdom of God has been restored to the earth, never to be taken away again. Under the direction of our Eternal Father, Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of this work, the cornerstone of the Church, and the Holy One of Israel. In the strength and power of the Lord, may we build up the kingdom of God on earth that it may be prepared to meet the kingdom of heaven at His coming. In the words of a battlefield anthem that might also stand as an anthem of the Restoration:

He has sounded forth the trumpet  
that shall never call retreat;  
He is sifting out the hearts of men  
before his judgment seat.  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer him;  
be jubilant my feet!  
Our God is marching on.  
["Battle Hymn of the Republic,"  
*Hymns*, no. 60]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We shall now have the pleasure to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Accountability for our use of resources

As we approach the conclusion of this wonderful conference, it is timely to ask ourselves what we are going to strive to *become* because of what we have heard from the Lord's servants.

We are accountable and will be judged for how we use what we have received. This eternal principle applies to all we have been given. In the parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14–30), the Savior taught this principle with reference to the use of property. The principle of accountability also applies to the spiritual resources conferred in the teachings we have been given and to the precious hours and days allotted to each of us during our time in mortality.

I wish to examine how this principle of accountability applies to our use of the enlarged time and information we have been given in our day.

Because of increased life expectancies and modern timesaving devices, most of us have far more discretionary time than our predecessors. We are accountable for how we use that time. "Thou shalt not idle away thy time," and "Cease to be idle" (D&C 60:13; 88:124), the Lord commanded the early missionaries and members. "Time flies on wings of lightning," we sing in a popular hymn; "we cannot call it back. It comes, then passes forward along its onward track. And if we are not

mindful, the chance will fade away, for life is quick in passing. 'Tis as a single day" ("Improve the Shining Moments," *Hymns*, no. 226).

The significance of our increased discretionary time has been magnified many times by modern data-retrieval technology. For good or for evil, devices like the Internet and the compact disc have put at our fingertips an incredible inventory of information, insights, and images. Along with fast food, we have fast communications and fast facts. The effect of these resources on some of us seems to fulfill the prophet Daniel's prophecy that in the last days "knowledge shall be increased" and "many shall run to and fro" (Daniel 12:4).

### Principles for using time and information

With greatly increased free time and vastly more alternatives for its use, it is prudent to review the fundamental principles that should guide us. Temporal circumstances change, but the eternal laws and principles that should guide our choices never change.

#### *Value what we have, not a bigger truckload*

A homely story contains a warning. I like this story because it translates easily into different languages and cultures.

Two men formed a partnership. They built a small shed beside a busy road.

They obtained a truck and drove it to a farmer's field, where they purchased a truckload of melons for a dollar a melon. They drove the loaded truck to their shed by the road, where they sold their melons for a dollar a melon. They drove back to the farmer's field and bought another truckload of melons for a dollar a melon. Transporting them to the roadside, they again sold them for a dollar a melon. As they drove back to the farmer's field to get another load, one partner said to the other, "We're not making much money on this business, are we?" "No, we're not," his partner replied. "Do you think we need a bigger truck?"

We don't need a bigger truckload of information, either. Like the two partners in my story, our biggest need is a clearer focus on how we should value and use what we already have.

Because of modern technology, the contents of huge libraries and other data resources are at the fingertips of many of us. Some choose to spend countless hours in unfocused surfing the Internet, watching trivial television, or scanning other avalanches of information. But to what purpose? Those who engage in such activities are like the two partners in my story, hurrying to and fro, hauling more and more but failing to grasp the essential truth that we cannot make a profit from our efforts until we understand the true value of what is already within our grasp.

A poet described this delusion as an "endless cycle" that brings "knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word," in which "wisdom" is "lost in knowledge" and "knowledge" is "lost in information" (T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" in *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* [1962], 96).

#### *Be wise and focused in using information*

We have thousands of times more available information than Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln. Yet which of us would think ourselves a thousand times

more educated or more serviceable to our fellowmen than they? The sublime quality of what these two men gave to us—including the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address—was not attributable to their great resources of information, for their libraries were comparatively small by our standards. Theirs was the wise and inspired use of a limited amount of information.

Available information wisely used is far more valuable than multiplied information allowed to lie fallow. I had to learn this obvious lesson as a law student.

Over 45 years ago I was introduced to a law library with hundreds of thousands of law books. (Today such a library would also include millions of additional pages available by electronic data retrieval.) When I began to prepare an assigned paper, I spent many days searching in hundreds of books for the needed material. I soon learned the obvious truth (already familiar to experienced researchers) that I could never complete my assigned task within the available time unless I focused my research in the beginning and stopped that research soon enough to have time to analyze my findings and compose my conclusions.

Faced with an excess of information in the marvelous resources we have been given, we must begin with focus or we are likely to become like those in the well-known prophecy about people in the last days—"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). We also need quiet time and prayerful pondering as we seek to develop information into knowledge and mature knowledge into wisdom.

#### *Avoid harmful information*

We also need focus to avoid what is harmful. The abundant information and images accessible on the Internet call for sharp focus and control to avoid accessing the pornography that is an increasing scourge in our society. As the *Deseret News*

noted in a recent editorial, "Images that used to be hidden in out-of-the-way store counters now are as close as a mouse click" ("Staying ahead of Pornography," 21–22 Feb. 2001, A12). The Internet has made pornography accessible almost without effort and often without leaving the privacy of one's home or room. The Internet has also facilitated the predatory activities of adults who use its anonymity and accessibility to stalk children for evil purposes. Parents and youth, beware!

*Use focused, not excessive, teaching resources*

There are many gospel implications of this easily accessible flood of information. For example, our Church web site now provides access to all of the general conference addresses and other contents of Church magazines for the past 30 years. Teachers can download bales of information on any subject. When highly focused, a handout can enrich. But a bale of handouts can detract from our attempt to teach gospel principles with clarity and testimony. Stacks of supplementary material can impoverish rather than enrich, because they can blur students' focus on the assigned principles and draw them away from prayerfully seeking to apply those principles in their own lives.

Nephi taught, "Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). That is focus. Nephi also said that as he taught from the scriptures, "I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23). That is personal application.

As a further illustration of the need for focus in using and teaching from the great information resources of the past, consider the comparative value today of the advice Brigham Young gave to an audience 140 years ago with what President Hinckley and other servants of the Lord are saying to each of us right now, in this conference. Or compare the value to

each of us of some other facts or advice from the distant past with what our stake president said at our last stake conference or what our bishop counseled us last Sunday.

*Hear and heed the Spirit's whisperings*

Overarching all of this is the importance of what the Spirit whispered to us last night or this morning about our own specific needs. Each of us should be careful that the current flood of information does not occupy our time so completely that we cannot focus on and hear and heed the still, small voice that is available to guide each of us with our own challenges today.

I hope that these cautions on the need for focus will not be understood as hostile to selective use of the new technology that has put such a wealth of information at our fingertips. In this I echo Brigham Young, who declared:

"Every discovery in science and art, that is really true and useful to mankind, has been given by direct revelation from God. . . . We should take advantage of all these great discoveries . . . and give to our children the benefit of every branch of useful knowledge, to prepare them to step forward and efficiently do their part in the great work" (*Deseret News*, 22 Oct. 1862, 129).

**Principles for establishing priorities**

We also need priorities. Our priorities determine what we seek in life. Most of what has been taught in this conference concerns priorities. I hope we will heed these teachings.

*Give top priority to God and His work*

Jesus taught about priorities when He said, "Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto



you" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; in Matthew 6:33; footnote a).

"Seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God" means to assign first priority to God and to His work. The work of God is to bring to pass the eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39), and all that this entails in the birth, nurturing, teaching, and sealing of our Heavenly Father's children. Everything else is lower in priority. Think about that reality as we consider some teachings and some examples on priorities. As someone has said, if we do not choose the kingdom of God first, it will make little difference in the long run what we have chosen instead of it.

#### *Seek revealed knowledge and eternal treasures*

As regards knowledge, the highest priority religious knowledge is what we receive in the temple. That knowledge is obtained from the explicit and symbolic teachings of the endowment and from the whisperings of the Spirit that come as we are desirous to seek and receptive to hear the revelation available to us in that sacred place.

As regards property, Jesus taught that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Consequently, we should not lay up for ourselves "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19). In other words, the treasures of our hearts—our priorities—should not be what the scriptures call "riches [and] the vain things of this world" (Alma 39:14). The "vain things of [the] world" include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence, and power. As to all of these, the scriptures remind us that "you cannot carry them with you" (Alma 39:14). We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).

All around us we have the good examples of those who seek permanent treasures—those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6) and put the kingdom of God first in their lives. Among the most visible such examples are the men and women who set aside their worldly pursuits and even say good-bye to their families to serve missions for the Lord. Tens of thousands of these are young missionaries. In addition, I pay particular tribute to those who serve missions in their mature years, some as mission leaders and some as what we call couple missionaries. Their remarkable service evidences their priorities, and their impressive example is a guide to their families and to all who know them.

#### *Prioritize precious, quality family time*

Our priorities are most visible in how we use our time. Someone has said, "Three things never come back—the spent arrow, the spoken word, and the lost opportunity." We cannot recycle or save the time allotted to us each day. With time, we have only one opportunity for choice, and then it is gone forever.

Good choices are especially important in our family life. For example, how do family members spend their free time together? Time together is necessary but not sufficient. Priorities should govern us in the precious time we give to our family relationships. Compare the impact of time spent merely in the same room as spectators for television viewing with the significance of time spent communicating with one another individually and as a family.

To cite another example, how much time does a family allocate to learning the gospel by scripture study and parental teachings, in contrast to the time family members spend viewing sports contests, talk shows, or soap operas? I believe many of us are overnourished on entertainment junk food and undernourished on the bread of life.

*Make decisions based on their eternal impact*

In terms of priorities for each major decision (such as education, occupation, place of residence, marriage, or childbearing), we should ask ourselves, "What will be the *eternal impact* of this decision?" Some decisions that seem desirable for mortality have unacceptable risks for eternity. In all such choices, we need to have inspired priorities and apply them in ways that will bring eternal blessings to us and to our family members.

Then, after we have done all we can, we should remember the wise counsel and comforting assurance of King Benjamin, who taught, "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

*Secure relationships through ordinances and covenants*

The ultimate Latter-day Saint priorities are twofold: First, we seek to understand our relationship to God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to secure that relationship by obtaining their saving ordinances and by keeping our personal covenants. Second, we seek to understand our relationship to our family members and to secure those relationships by the ordinances of the temple and by keeping the covenants we make in that holy place. These relationships, secured in the way I have explained, provide eternal blessings available in no other way. No combination of science, success, property, pride, prominence, or power can provide these eternal blessings!

I testify that this is true, and I testify of God the Father, whose plan establishes

the way, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, whose Atonement makes it all possible. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**President Monson**

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Ricks College, and the Melchizedek Priesthood choir from stakes in Salt Lake, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center. We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, please obey the traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert S. Wood of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned for six months.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Conferences held to edify and fortify us

Brethren and sisters, we've had a wonderful conference. The talks have been inspirational. The prayers of the speakers who prepared them and of those of us who heard them have been answered. We've all been edified.

Now, before I give my concluding words, I would like to make a little explanation. People are talking about why in the world I'm walking with a cane. That's become the topic of conversation these days. Well, I saw that Brigham Young used a cane. John Taylor had a cane, and Wilford Woodruff had a cane, and President Grant had a cane in his old age. And I've seen President McKay with a cane and Spencer Kimball with a cane, and I'm just trying to get in style.

The fact of the matter is, I have a little vertigo. I'm a little unsteady on my feet, and the doctors don't know why it is. But they're still working on me, and I hope it'll be over in a day or two.

Now, we've all been edified in this great conference. We should all be standing a little taller as we adjourn today than we were when we came together yesterday morning.

I constantly marvel at these great semiannual gatherings. We have heard 26 speakers during these two days. That's a very large number. Each is told how much time he or she will have. But none is told what to speak about. And yet all of the talks seem to harmonize, one with another, each a thread in the tapestry of a grand and beautiful pattern. I think nearly everyone in this vast worldwide audience can now say of one or more of the talks, "That was intended just for me. That is just what I needed to hear."

This is the reason, I may say, why these conferences are held—to strengthen our testimonies of this work, to fortify us against temptation and sin, to lift our sights, to receive instruction concerning the programs of the Church and the pattern of our lives.

Many churches, of course, have large gatherings, but I know of none to compare with these conferences held every six months, year after year. They are truly world conferences.

### Go forth with a stronger resolve

This work is alive and vital as it moves across the world in communities both large and small. The genius of this work lies with the missionaries who teach in faraway places with strange-sounding names, and with the converts who come of these teachings. As I have occasion to travel, these are the places I like to visit—the small and largely unknown and scattered branches where a great pioneer work is going forward.

Now, brothers and sisters, let us go forth from this conference with a stronger resolve to live the gospel, to be more faithful, to be better fathers and mothers and sons and daughters, to be absolutely loyal to one another as families, and absolutely loyal to the Church as members.

### Nurture and cultivate testimonies

This is God's holy work. It is divine in its origin and in its doctrine. Jesus Christ stands as its head. He is our immortal Savior and Redeemer. His revelation is the source of our doctrine, our faith, our teaching, in fact the underlying pattern of our lives. Joseph Smith was an instrument

in the hands of the Almighty in bringing to pass this Restoration. And that basic element of revelation is with the Church today as it was in Joseph's day.

Our individual testimonies of these truths are the basis of our faith. We must nurture them. We must cultivate them. We can never forsake them. We can never lay them aside. Without them we have nothing. With them we have everything.

As we return to our homes, may we experience a strengthening of our faith

in these eternal and unchanging truths. May there be peace and love in our homes and an abundance of the good things of heaven and earth, I humbly pray as I bid you good-bye for another season, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Robert S. Wood offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from Ricks College provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. The choir was directed by Eda Ashby and Randy Kempton, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood

choir from stakes in Salt Lake City. Paul Broomhead directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference

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